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BLACK BEARD, THE BUCCANEER; or, THE CURSE OF THE COAST.

A ROMANCE OF THE CAROLINA WATERS A CENTURY AGO.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,

AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MONTEZUMA, THE MERCILESS," "FREELANCE, THE BUCCANEER," "WILD BILL, THE PISTOL DEAD SHOT,"
"WILD BILL'S GOLD TRAIL," ETC., ETC.



"BACK TO YOUR COMMODORE, SIR OFFICER, AND TELL HIM THAT I, BLACK BEARD, THE PIRATE, STAND OUT TO SEA AT ONCE, AND DEFY HIM."

Black Beard, THE BUCCANEER;

OR,

THE CURSE OF THE COAST.

A Romance of the Carolina Waters a
Century Ago.

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CHAPTER I.

THE WRECKED YACHT.

A SMALL sail-boat, under close reefed main-sail and jib, was making with all haste toward a distant haven.

At her helm stood a bronzed-faced old tar, calm and watchful, for upon him depended the safety of the little craft.

In the cock-pit crouched a score of persons, who had a few hours before been full of life and jest, for they had come out for a day of enjoyment; but now the brightness had faded from their faces and anxiety and dread remained, while the song and laughter had given place to low tones of foreboding.

The little vessel was a stanch one, and behaved well in the stiff breeze then blowing, and cut through the waves at a driving pace, as though, like a thing of life, it was anxious to fly to a haven of safety in the far away harbor ahead.

At the peak floated the English ensign, and at the top was the pennant of a man of rank, and none less than the Governor Commandant of the Carolinas more than a century ago.

Fond of the water, Governor Sir Henry Malcolm had had built for him the little yacht, flying so rapidly along, and invited a party of friends of himself and daughter to join him in a day's cruise.

For the morning hours all had gone well; but suddenly a gale had come down upon them from the cloudless heavens, and soon after dark clouds loomed up to show that a fearful storm was about to burst upon the sea.

Instantly the little craft had been put back for the harbor from whence it had sailed; but when the storm-clouds rose threateningly astern and with the rapidity for which they are noted in Southern latitudes, all feared for the worst, and from the hearts of the more timid hope utterly faded away.

The Governor-Commandant, a large, stern-faced man, sat next the helmsman, and by his side was his daughter, a maiden of eighteen, budding into pure and beautiful womanhood, and with a face that was the index of a soul that bore no mar upon it.

A few of the Governor's stately friends and staff officers, half a score of his daughter's companions, two seamen and the helmsman, comprised all on board the *Coraline*, as the yacht had been named, in honor of the fair maiden who presided over her father's gubernatorial mansion.

"Carter, I fear we will never make it," said Sir Henry, addressing the helmsman in a low tone.

The latter cast a quick eye astern, and instead of replying, sung out in seaman-like tones:

"Ready about! Stand ready, lads, to let all come down!"

The order was given to his two seamen, who stood already at their posts of duty, and almost instantly the yacht had been brought round with her bows to meet the storm, and lay under bare pole.

Nor was the maneuver executed a moment too soon, for down from the trailing masses of clouds, now above them, came torrents of wind, and the seas seemed to shake under the terrific burst of thunder, while the eyes of all on board were blinded by the livid lightning that played about them in forked splendor that would have been grand had it not been so fearful.

And then the mad waters seemed to wish to show their power, for, seizing the little craft, they tossed it about like a chip in a mill-race; and when Carter sought to spread canvas enough upon the slender mast to steady her, the winds snapped it in two, and with its wreckage of sail and rigging, sent it flying over the sea.

With the sunshine shut out by the ebony clouds, there seemed to be a semi-darkness like coming night fall upon the waters, which here, there, everywhere, were lashed to snowy fury, and rose like ragged hills upon every side, threatening to engulf the little vessel at any moment.

All knew that nothing could be done more for their safety, and, as the rude waves sent torrents of water on board, filling the little cabin and cockpit, and the yacht was strained by the savage blows, causing her to leak badly, it seemed but a question of time when all must sink to a grave beneath the waters.

Then despair settled upon every face, and

death in the place of former joy became the companion of all.

"How much longer will she hold up, Carter?" asked the Governor in trembling tones, drawing his idolized daughter nearer to him and glancing over the despairing faces that looked upon the seaman, awaiting breathlessly his answer.

"She is leaking badly fore and aft, Sir Henry, and at the best must fill and go down within half an hour," was the moody reply of the sailing-master.

All glanced at each other, but though a few moans were heard, with a broken sob or two from the fair passengers on board, not a word was uttered other than the Governor's fervent: "God have mercy upon us!"

Growing fiercer now were winds and waves, and settling deeper was the little yacht; while all, knowing the end must soon come, huddled together in despair, white-faced, drenched, trembling and despairing.

Strong men thought of the ambition of their lives that must there go down into the sea, and others let their thoughts turn upon the loved ones on shore, in happy homes that soon must mourn for them, while others were too crushed with woe to have thoughts away from the doom that was so near them.

"Sail ho!"

The cry of Carter arose above the howling winds and roaring waves, and all who heard it sprang to their feet.

"Whereaway, my good Carter?" asked the Governor-Commandant, quickly springing to the side of the sailing-master, who still held the helm, though his duty there had ended.

"Directly astern, sir, and coming down upon us like a race-horse."

"Ah! I see her!"

"Cheer up, friends, for help is at hand," cried Sir Henry, and steadying himself, he gazed earnestly upon the strange sail, now not a mile away, and heading directly for the yacht, though it was evident she had not been sighted by the vessel, lying a wreck upon the waters as she was.

"A schooner, and of a rakish build that I do not like; but 'any port in a storm,' is the wrecked mariner's cry," said the Governor aloud, while all hung breathlessly upon his words.

"She may be a pirate," suggested a staff officer, in a whisper; but his words were caught by every ear, and the frown that Sir Henry gave him, as he saw Coraline his daughter, hitherto calm and brave, start and shudder, made the young officer regret his words.

"Doubtless it is one of the Government cutters, Sir Henry," said the sailing-master, anxious to pour oil upon the troubled waters.

"Yes, Carter, it must be, for there are several cutters cruising now in these waters."

"Get ready to hail her," and he added in a low tone:

"Even a pirate deck is preferable to death, and a liberal ransom will buy our freedom."

"Yes, sir, for the yacht will not hold up half an hour."

"But that is not one of the Government cutters, Sir Henry," and Carter spoke in a whisper.

"You know that, do you?" quickly asked the Governor in the same low tone.

"Yes, sir, she is smaller than any of the cutters."

"Then Captain Villars may be right?"

"Yes, sir."

"So be it."

"Between death and rescue by a pirate, we have but one choice, and we'll take it," was the low reply of the Governor, and as the strange vessel had now drawn near enough, he gave orders to Carter to hail her, for still the wreck had not been discovered by those upon the deck of the coming vessel.

CHAPTER II.

A MYSTERIOUS CRAFT.

"AHoy! the schooner ahoy!"

Loudly the hail of Carter, the sailing master of the wrecked yacht, rung out over the wild waters.

But no sign on the vessel indicated that they heard the hail, and again and again it was repeated.

But the result was the same, for the schooner came dashing on, directly on a course that would carry her over the yacht, unless those on board beheld the little wreck in time to port or starboard the helm.

"All together!"

"Let us all hail!" cried the Governor, and buoyed up with hope every one on the yacht raised their voices in chorus, and the thrilling cry went forth:

"Ahoy! Schooner ahoy!"

But back into their teeth the fierce winds blew their cry, and the schooner still held on, and then destruction from their only means of safety seemed evident.

"By Heaven! see there!"

The cry came from Captain Villars, who had made the unfortunate remark about the stranger proving to be a pirate. As he spoke he pointed at the bows of the schooner.

"What is it?" cried a number of voices.

"They see us, for behold that man standing upon the bows!"

It was true, a tall form enveloped in a cloak, was visible standing upon the schooner's bows, and apparently observing the little wreck with the utmost complaisance of manner.

"Ho the schooner!"

"Do you intend to run us down?" cried the Governor, in stern tones, as his eyes noted the bearing of the man.

No answer came from the mysterious personage, only the wave of a hand.

That wave of the hand was evidently a signal to the helmsman, for instantly the sharp bows of the schooner swept a few points to starboard, and a cheer broke from those on the wreck to feel that they were not to be run down by the one hope they had of safety.

"Ho the schooner!"

"Will you take us aboard? We are sinking!"

The cry came from the lips of the Governor, and was in appealing tones.

Still no answer from the man on the bows of the schooner.

As the craft drew nearer, he sprang upon the port bulwarks of the schooner, and clinging to the forward ratlines, gazed fixedly upon the wreck and its occupants.

Yet not a word came from his lips, and the schooner dashed by like the wind.

A groan came from many upon the wrecked yacht, while in stentorian tones the Governor shouted:

"Man, are you utterly inhuman?"

"We cry to you for succor, for we are sinking!"

Still no reply, and the schooner swept on.

A wail of woe was wrung from every lip at this seeming inhumanity, to be checked by the glad cry from the sailing-master.

"See! she goes about!"

"We are saved!"

Stern lips and fair alike, gave vent to their joy at this glad news, and every eye turned upon the schooner with hope again in the heart.

As though on a pivot she wore around, for she had been running before the gale, and with her sheets close hauled and reefed down, began to beat back in short tacks toward the wreck.

Watching in silence her course, those on the yacht saw her bound from wave to wave one minute, to sink far down beneath them next, and knew that she was taking big chances in coming to their rescue against such a sea and gale of wind.

At last however she passed on the starboard tack, and as she did so the same tall, cloaked form they had seen in the schooner's bows, now sprung up on the bulwarks aft, and cried in a deep voice:

"Make fast these lines!"

"Cast!"

The last order was given to some of his own crew, and several lines were at once thrown to the deck of the yacht, and skillfully caught by the seamen on board and made fast.

Then as the schooner shot by the lines were let run out, until she had gotten a certain distance, when she suddenly luffed up sharp and lay to upon the rough waters.

The yacht was then under the stern of the schooner, and ordering his men in a cool, commanding way, the cloaked officer began the rescue of those on the yacht.

It was a most perilous undertaking, but one by one, intrusting themselves to life-buoys thrown to them, and with stout lines attached, they were drawn over the stern of the schooner to the deck in safety.

With true self-sacrifice, the Governor and his lovely daughter, having gotten their friends into such danger, refused to go until the last.

The ladies were first taken, after one of the three seamen of the wreck, in obedience to an order from the schooner's officer, had intrusted himself to a buoy, and springing overboard had been safely drawn on board, and then came the gentlemen's turn, for Coraline firmly refused to leave until all had been rescued.

"Go, Carter!" said the Governor, when the sailing-master hung back, as his time came.

"After your excellency," was the reply.

"No, I go last."

"Then after the Lady Coraline, Sir Henry?" said the honest tar.

"No, I shall be the last to leave this wreck," was the firm response of the maiden, and she glanced furtively at the deck, to see how rapidly the little bulk was settling.

The seaman made no reply, for he saw that time was precious, and seizing the life-buoy he sprang into the sea.

A moment after he was drawn to the schooner's deck in safety.

"Now, Coraline, my noble child, you must go," said the Governor, earnestly.

"No, father, I will be the last to leave the deck."

"You go, sir, and I will follow," and again she glanced at the rapidly-settling wreck.

"But my child—"

"Father, I am determined!"

"I will not—"

"Father! see, delay is fatal, and we will both be lost."

"Go, and I will follow!"

With a muttered oath the Governor hastily

seized the buoy and sprung into the sea, and as he reached the deck there came one wild cry of horror.

The wreck had gone down with a mighty plunge, and Coraline Malcolm, sinking upon her knees, as she felt the end coming, clasped her hands, as though in prayer, and had been carried beneath the wild waters.

There was a huge pit in the waves, a mad storm of waters, a loud snapping of the lines that held the wreck, and the fated craft had sunk beneath the waves, just as a form leaped from the schooner's deck into the sea with the ringing cry:

"I will save her!"

CHAPTER III.

THE SCHOONER'S CAPTAIN.

THE one who had sprung into the sea to the rescue of Coraline Malcolm, ere the cries of horror had ceased, was none other than the cloaked officer of the mysterious schooner.

He had cast his cloak, hat and sword-belt aside, and taken the plunge to what seemed certain death.

While tossed about upon the wild seas, he cried, sternly:

"Ho, there, lads! throw overboard several life-buoys with long lines attached!"

The order was promptly obeyed, and the daring man clutched one, just as he was being borne beyond its reach.

Eagerly his eyes scanned the foaming waters as he searched for the form which he felt must rise to the surface.

And anxiously all on the schooner fixed their gaze upon the seething waves, the agonized father, weak, trembling and in despair.

"There she is!"

The cry came from Carter, and was echoed by every lip on board; but the quick eye of the bold officer had just detected the fair face and lovely form as it came toward him upon the crest of a mighty wave, and with tremendous strokes he made toward her.

She was unconscious when he grasped her in his strong arms, and no longer knew her peril.

"Draw in lively, lads!"

The brave man gave the order as coolly as though he were upon his own deck, and soon the two were drawn on board the schooner, where they were greeted with a shout of joy that rose above the howling winds.

Refusing to release his burden to her father and others who crowded about him, the officer at once made his way to the cabin, saying, in a tone that showed that he meant it for Sir Henry only:

"Will you come with me, sir?"

The Governor at once did so, and knelt by the side of his daughter as she was tenderly placed by her rescuer upon a lounge.

"Is she dead?" asked the poor father, timidly.

"She is not," was the calm reply.

"Thank God! and may He bless you, for your courage has saved her and all of us."

"But how strangely like death she looks."

"Her heart I felt beating firmly as I held her in my arms."

"She will soon recover, and, if you wish, you can call the ladies of the party to your aid, and the cabin shall be devoted wholly to them."

"I thank you, sir."

"I will ask aid of my daughter's female companions."

"You are more than kind," and the Governor held forth his hand to the schooner's commander.

But the hand was not taken, and without a word the strange officer turned and left the cabin.

Going upon deck he bade the ladies of the party to go into the cabin, and to the gentlemen he said, abruptly:

"The ward-room is at your service, gentlemen, and my under officers will look to your comfort."

They would have thanked him, but he turned abruptly away and began pacing the deck with a stern face and moody brow.

Soon after Sir Henry came on deck, his face no longer wearing a look of sorrow, for it had given place to an expression of joy.

"My daughter is herself again, sir, and begs the honor of your presence in the cabin, that she may thank you," he said, pleasantly, approaching the commander of the schooner.

"Thanks are but idle words, Governor Sir Henry Malcolm, and I care not for them."

"Present my regards to your daughter, and say that I am glad she escaped death," was the cold reply.

The Governor was pained and surprised, for he was certainly almost rudely rebuffed by one to whom he, and his friends, owed their lives.

He saw that he was on an armed vessel, such an one as was then often seen in the service of the English Government, which at the time I write of, held the Carolinas as her provinces.

The crew was a strangely small one, for a vessel carrying seven guns, being hardly over a score in number; but they were in the uniform of British seamen, and their captain and his two officers were the same.

All was ship-shape about the little craft, and there appeared to be no reason to doubt her

being a Government cutter, though she carried no flag at her peak.

Her commander, the Governor noted, was a man of striking presence, tall, superbly formed, and apparently thirty years of age.

He wore his black hair long, for it fell in curls upon his shoulders, which even the wetting they had gotten did not take out.

His face was partially concealed beneath a long beard of jetty hue; but his eyes, dark, piercing and full of fire seemed to read one's inmost thoughts.

"May I ask," said the Governor, politely, "whom it is that I have the honor of owing so deep a debt of gratitude to?" and he gazed into the face of the strange man before him with wonder at his unaccountable manner toward himself and those whom he had rescued.

Without answering the question the schooner's commander asked:

"Are you not Sir Henry Malcolm?"

"I am, sir, and I seem known to you."

"Am I remiss in forgetting one whom I have before met?"

"We have not met before, sir," was the cold reply.

"I must beg that you refresh my memory, my dear sir."

Without heeding this, the schooner's commander said:

"You are the Governor-Commandant of the Carolinas, I believe?"

"I am, sir, the representative of his majesty for the Carolinas, and if I can serve you in any way, I will gladly do so."

"It is I, sir, that can serve you, for I doubt not but that you desire to be landed in Charleston, where is your gubernatorial home?"

"It is, sir, and if you will land myself and friends there I will esteem it as a great favor, and then be more than happy to claim you as my guest."

The officer smiled, but said:

"I hardly think the Governor of the Carolinas would be willing to entertain an outlaw."

"An outlaw?"

The Governor stepped back, as he uttered the words, with a look of commingled amazement and horror.

"Yes, Sir Henry Malcolm, I am an outlaw," was the cool reply.

"No, no, you cannot be, for this is certainly a Government vessel," said the Governor.

"It was a Government vessel, sir, but it has lately changed masters, and is now an outlaw craft."

The answer was given in a tone of the utmost coolness.

"And you surely cannot be her commander?" said the Governor.

"I surely am, Sir Henry Malcolm."

"A pirate?"

"If so you will, yes."

The Governor was utterly discomfited by what he heard, and gazed upon the strange man before him in amazement, and with an expression of pain, while he said, in low, earnest tones:

"I am more than sorry, sir, to hear from your own lips that you are other than what I took you for."

"At the risk of your vessel you have saved my friends and myself, while, at a peril that I, her father, dared not risk, deeming it madness to do so, you snatched my daughter from the very jaws of death."

"Now I am to understand that one so noble in heart, so brave in nature, is a pirate, a man hunted down upon the sea?"

"Yes, Sir Henry, that is just what I am; but permit me to say that I make no war upon the unfortunate, and, as you came to my vessel as waifs from the sea, I will land you in safety at your own home."

"For a ransom, sir?"

"No, I said not so!" was the quick rejoinder of the self-proclaimed pirate.

"And again you show that you are not at heart the outlaw you seem."

The pirate smiled, but the Governor was unable to interpret the smile, yet seemed to feel that it was full of meaning.

"And you ask no conditions, such as pardon for the past, upon promise of amendment in the future—for remember, my power is great, and willingness to serve you, for all you have done, is equal to granting any wish."

"I ask but one condition, Sir Henry Malcolm."

"Name it."

"I ask no pardon for the past, and give no promise for amendment in the future; but I request that you do not make known now to your daughter and your friends, not until we have parted, that I am what I am."

"Gladly!"

"Nor would I have them ever know that the one to whom they owe so much is—"

"Speak plainly, Sir Henry!"

"You meant to say, is a pirate?"

"Yes."

"It matters not, sir, as soon as we have parted."

"Now, as I intend to run my vessel into a fortress-guarded port, I must ask your protection for her, for my crew, and myself."

"Assuredly, sir."

"Run up the English flag to your peak, and you shall be treated as though you were one of our own cruisers."

"Pardon me, Sir Henry, but there is but one flag that floats at the peak of the vessel I command, and that is the white skull and cross-bones upon a black field."

"The black flag indeed."

"Yes."

"My forts would open fire upon you at once with that hideous flag above your decks."

"I will not hoist it, sir, nor will I run up any other."

"If you are satisfied to sail upon a deck with no flag above it I will run you up to the town and land you before it is dark."

"If not I will have to take you to some other port that is not so securely guarded."

"No, I shall signal the forts that I am on board, and will give your vessel full protection until you again put to sea?"

"Thank you, Sir Henry, and should I wish to remain in port twenty-four hours to repair damages?"

"You are welcome to do so, sir. I cannot be unkind to you after all you have done."

"Again I thank you, Sir Henry, and, as your sailing-master must be a coast pilot, kindly order him to take the wheel and run the schooner in, for there lies the harbor before us."

As he spoke, the pirate captain pointed to where the land loomed up ahead, and upon either bow of the schooner, which was driving along at great speed through the wild waters, though the storm-clouds were breaking away, and the wind was blowing with far less fierceness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEA-CADET.

NEARLY a year prior to the storm that wrecked the yacht Coraline, with her distinguished owner and guests on board, Sir Henry Malcolm had come to the Carolinas as their Governor, having been appointed to the high office by his king, who liked his subject so well, that he deemed it advisable to give him a chance to rebuild his fortunes in the New World.

Sir Henry had always been extravagant, and a lover of cards too; the two failings had greatly diminished his one-time large inheritance, and he was glad to get a chance to accept a Governorship, which could but bring great riches with it, for in those days, the Colonial Governors grew rich with surprising rapidity, and in fact were really petty monarchs over their domains.

Upon the vessel-of-war that brought the Governor, his daughter and his suite to America, was a young cadet, who had been lately appointed to the British navy for having boldly come off-shore one fearful night of storm on the Irish coast, and piloted a vessel-of-war into a secure haven.

Reginald Rossmore was his name, and he was the only son of a poverty-stricken old baronet, whose ancient retreat upon the coast was almost tumbling down about his ears.

The old baronet had engaged a tutor for his son, bought him horses, dogs and guns, and built him a small yacht, and then considered that he had done his duty toward him, after which he settled himself down to a life of ease, drinking up the wines with which his cellar was stocked, and living almost wholly apart from Reginald, who spent his leisure hours, away from his books, in the chase or in yachting along the dangerous coast, his only companions being two young fishermen whose parents' cabins were on the Rossmore domain.

Thus had the young heir to Rossmore Castle, and as the country-folk called it, "Rossmore Rookery," grown up, and it made of him a bold, free hearted, daring man, almost before he had left boyhood's estate.

Seeing the vessel-of-war run in to escape a coming storm, and drop anchor in a haven of safety with the wind from some quarters, but a retreat of death with it blowing from whence the gale was then coming, Reginald Rossmore at once determined to save her.

He had been seated at his room window reading, when his eye fell upon the vessel; but instantly his book was cast aside and he darted down the stone stairway to the dilapidated court, and thence adown the steep hillside to the little haven where lay his boats.

It was market day, and neither of his two fisher-boys were at home; but he sprung on board his little craft, hoisted the close-reefed sail, and boldly started out into the wild waters to save the vessel he knew must be lost if he did not go to her aid.

He beheld the stately vessel dragging her anchors beneath the force of the hurricane, and those on board not knowing how to escape from the dangerous anchorage, which only a short while before had been apparently a haven of refuge to them.

Loudly pealed the guns of the vessel for a pilot, yet though brave men and true stood on the cliffs watching the drifting of the craft, none attempted to venture forth in that wild scene of storm.

Suddenly a wild shout broke the bounds of

discipline on board, and three hundred voices pealed forth the cheer for one brave man who had dared death to save the lives of others.

Nearer and nearer came the little craft, and in that mad whirlpool of waters he could not run alongside, so he called for a rope, and fastening it around him, sprang into the sea, allowing his pretty craft to be hurled away to destruction.

Cool, fearless and seemingly utterly at home upon a large vessel, he simply announced himself as a pilot, and taking the wheel, ran the gallant craft to a safe mooring, and indignantly refused all recompense.

"But, my dear young sir," said the captain of the vessel, believing his pilot, in his everyday sea suit, to be a coast fisherman:

"You have lost your little craft, saved the king a vessel and three hundred lives, and you must accept reward."

The handsome face of the young man flushed as he responded:

"I am Reginald Rossmore, son of Sir Barney Rossmore, and I serve no man for gold."

"What I have done has been for humanity's sake alone."

The words were spoken proudly, and the commander of the vessel of war at once offered apology, and begged the young sailor to become his guest on board as long as he should anchor in those waters.

But Reginald Rossmore politely declined, and leaving the vessel, returned to his old home, where he did not even tell his ease-loving old father what he had done.

Some weeks after, however, he was summoned to his father's room and handed a large official document, the seal of which had been broken, while the baronet said, in his peevish way:

"Here is a commission from your king, Reginald, appointing you a sea-cadet in his service in return for some foolhardy act of yours a few weeks ago— There, don't tell me what it was, for I am very tired to-night and wish to retire."

The face of Reginald Rossmore flushed with pride; but he said calmly:

"I'll not tell you, sir, but simply say good-night and good-by, as I shall accept the king's commission, and depart in the early morning for London, where, I see by this letter, I am ordered to join my vessel."

"You will go, then?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Life at sea is a most uncomfortable one, you know," whined the old baronet.

"Not more so than my life at home, father."

"Very well; good-by if you must go, and I hope you will do well, Reginald."

"Thank you, sir," and without touching the hand even of his selfish father, he left the room and began to pack up for his journey.

He had little to pack, and soon all was in readiness, and his father's valet brought him a purse with a few hundreds of pounds in it, and a letter to some old friend in London.

Arriving in the great metropolis, Reginald found that he was to be honored by an interview with his king, who conferred upon him, for his gallant service in saving the vessel-of-war, a decoration which many a brave man had lost life in striving to win.

Going on board the cruiser to which he was ordered, Reginald, for the first time in his life, felt the power of love when his eyes fell upon one who was to be a fair passenger across the seas in the vessel upon which he was a cadet.

That fair passenger was Coraline Malcolm, the daughter of the new Governor to the Carolinas, and who, turning her back upon men of high rank and title, let her heart go forth to the handsome young sea-cadet, greatly to the disgust of the other officers and the chagrin of her father, who had other views for the beautiful maiden than in allowing her to become the wife of a poor young man, possessing only his sword and his cadetship.

CHAPTER V.

THE RIVALS.

UPON his arrival in America Sir Henry at once laid the corner-stone upon which to found the fortune he intended to make.

With the higher-ranking officers of the army and navy, the wealthier planters of aristocratic families, and the better townspeople, he made himself familiar, and gained favor in their eyes.

The old gubernatorial mansion he had fitted up in almost palatial luxury, the grounds were made an Eden of beauty, and the weekly receptions held there partook of a miniature court in their splendor.

Of course, there were suitors innumerable for the hand of the Governor's lovely daughter, who was the very idol of her father's heart.

But to all both the maiden and her father seemed to turn a deaf ear, unless I except the young sea-cadet, to whom Lady Coraline, as she was called, had given her love, though she had no power to bestow with it her hand.

At last there came one personage to the gubernatorial domain, upon whom Sir Henry turned with almost affectionate regard.

That new-comer was next to himself in rank

in the province, for he was sent out to command his majesty's fleets on the coast of America from Maryland to Florida.

Added to his naval rank he was a lord, and better still, he possessed vast riches.

This personage, Commodore Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, was just over forty years of age, fine looking, yet a martinet in the service, and popular with none of his officers or men.

He came to the Carolinas expecting to rule the Governor himself; but discovering the beauty of Lady Coraline, at his first interview became infatuated with her, and curbing his overbearing spirit became like another man, for at once he made up his mind to make her his wife.

Of course where such a distinguished suitor laid claim to the heart and hand of his daughter, Sir Henry was most willing and constantly praised the commodore to the Lady Coraline, extolling his exalted rank, and saying all that he could to gain him favor in her eyes.

The Lady Coraline however was true to her first love, and now and then the young lovers were wont to meet clandestinely, enjoy a walk, a ride, or a sail by moonlight, and part with vows of never-dying regard for each other.

But one fatal day Lord Trenholm St. Ledger made a formal proposal to Sir Henry for the hand of his daughter, and it was accepted by the Governor.

"Has she any affection for any one else?" asked the jealous lover.

"A school-girl attachment for a young cadet, my lord," was the reply.

"I have heard that the Lady Coraline held a romantic regard for a young naval officer; but I determined to ask you what truth there is in the report, Sir Henry," said the commodore.

The Governor laughed at the idea that there was anything serious in the attachment of his daughter for the young seaman, though he knew well that Coraline had frankly confessed to him her love for Reginald Rossmore; but he said:

"The young officer was on the cruiser that brought us over, my lord, and was very kind to my little girl."

"He is a handsome boy, sung well, talked well, had won a decoration from his majesty, and won Coraline's regard."

"I am glad to know it was no more, Sir Henry."

"But who is this young cadet that you speak of?"

"His name is Reginald Rossmore, my lord."

The nobleman was upon his feet in an instant, and said quickly:

"Then by Heaven, Sir Henry, the romantic love of the sea-cadet and the Lady Coraline is deep-seated, for I met him last night upon the water, and now I could swear that it was your daughter that accompanied him."

The Governor turned very pale, but said:

"No, no, my lord, for my daughter retired early to her chambers."

"Went to her chambers and then went out to meet that young scapegrace."

"I tell you, Sir Henry, that last night I did not expect to return to my vessel, intending to remain at the lion on shore, and enjoy a game of cards with several planters. But at midnight I changed my mind and going to the landing sprang into a boat, determined to row myself down to my vessel, as it was a lovely, starlit night."

"Some villains dogged me for the purpose of robbery, and came in chase."

"I pulled hard, but they overhauled me, sprang upon me, and my life would have been forfeited, for they were three to one, when suddenly up darted a light boat, there came the flash and report of a revolver, the clash of steel against steel, and the two remaining villains fell dead, for I had already disposed of one."

"I turned to my rescuer, and found it to be Reginald Rossmore, a sea-cadet upon my own vessel, and in the stern of the light boat in which he had been rowing about upon the waves sat a young lady."

"There was something familiar in her form, but she kept her face hidden, and seeing that she wished to avoid recognition I said nothing, nor appeared to notice her presence."

"I thanked the young sea-cadet for his service, and rowed on to my vessel, telling him I would send a boat's crew after the dead villains and he then pulled away, and his course lay straight toward your garden wall."

"This is remarkable, my lord."

"And you suspect this lady of being my daughter?" asked the Governor, anxiously.

"I do, Sir Henry, and she needs must love the young scapegrace most dearly to be alone at midnight upon the water with him."

"Then your lordship desires to withdraw your proposal for my daughter's hand?"

"By no means, your excellency, for I am not that kind of a lover."

"If I have a rival, so be it; and my intention is to get rid of him," was the bold reply.

"But how can it be done, my lord?"

"Simply order him back to England."

"I will do it, my lord."

"Send him with dispatches so he will suspect nothing, and write the admiralty secretly to

keep him there on other duty, or at least detain him for a few months."

"And then, my lord?"

"Oh, then, when he returns he will find your daughter my wife, that is all."

"It shall be as you say, my lord; and he shall go in the packet-ship that sails to-morrow, for I intended sending dispatches by her commander."

And upon the morrow the packet ship sailed with Reginald Rossmore on board, and ordered off so suddenly he had no time in which to even bid the Lady Coraline farewell, and write to her he dared not.

And that same night, believing her lover faithless, after having had an interview with her father, who told her that he had asked to return to England to marry a fair maiden there awaiting him, the Lady Coraline smothered her feelings, and consented to become the wife of Lord Trenholm St. Ledger within the next six months.

Five months of that time had gone by, and the British commodore was daily expected back from a cruise to the Indies, whither he had gone pirate hunting, and poor Coraline dreaded the day far more than she did the hour that must bring her death, for her heart was one to love once and once only, and believing Reginald Rossmore false, she really cared not to live.

Thus matters stood when the yacht was wrecked and those on board were rescued by a pirate craft, and Coraline, who had seemed to sink down into the depths, was saved by the outlaw captain, who had risked his life for her sake.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLUE BELT.

ON a pleasant afternoon, a month previous to the going down of the Governor's yacht, off the Carolina coast, a king's craft was lying at anchor in the river Thames, a cable's length below the gloomy Tower of London.

The confused hum of the city, mingling with the deep tones of a tolling bell, came to the ears of those upon the deck of the yacht, as they stood leaning over the bulwarks, gazing alternately at the dismal Tower, or the series of noble bridges that spanned the river above, and crowded with people hurrying to and fro on pleasure or duty bent.

An officer was pacing the quarter-deck, clad in the undress uniform of a lieutenant in the British naval service, and he seemed too deeply taken up with his own meditations, to enjoy the stirring scene about him.

He was tall in stature, of athletic form, and had the air of one of high birth.

His face was exceedingly handsome, dark, full of expression and resolution, though it then wore a look of worry that ill became it.

The vessel was a model of symmetry and beauty, of about one hundred and sixty tons burden, and evidently had been constructed with a view to speed in sailing.

She carried six brass long eighteens as broad-side guns, and a pivot piece of large caliber mounted forward.

Her crew seemed scant, there appearing only about two-score men upon her decks, and these were either watching the passers-by upon the bridges, gazing at the forests of masts upon the river, or "spinning yarns," with all a sailor's superstition, of the dark deeds the gray walls of the old Tower had concealed.

The craft was schooner rig, had a rakish look, and her masts were so tapering, and inclined so far over the stern, that a line dropped from the mizzen truck would have fallen beyond her davits.

The masts and spars were polished black, and to a seaman's eye nothing could be more beautiful than the finished, nautical-like arrangement of her running and standing rigging.

Her hull was jet-black, excepting a belt of blue that ran around her bulwarks fore and aft, and from which she took her name, Blue Belt.

The beautiful craft lay amid the river craft, which had hove short, or veered out more cable to give her room, like a queen of the waters.

Why the beautiful vessel was lying at anchor so near the Tower, the bumble river skippers and coasters could not imagine.

But there she had been at anchor for a week, all ready to sail at a moment's notice, and speculation as to her destination, and the duty she was to perform was rife.

At last the atmosphere grew hazy, the sun went down beyond the city horizon, and twilight fell upon the waters.

But still the young lieutenant paced the deck, with the same quick tread, and wearing the same anxious look.

At length he started, and turning his eyes up the river, beheld two boats coming down toward the schooner.

The manner in which their oars rose and fell, seemed to betray that they were men-of-war's boats, although the darkness was too great to discern more than that they were crowded with men.

Nearer and nearer they came, heading directly for the yacht.

Soon the shrill voice of a young midshipman called out:

"Boats ahoy!"

"What boats are those?"

"The king's yacht," was the low, deep response, from the leading boat.

"Ay, ay, sir, come alongside!" returned the midgy, and a moment after over the gangway came a tall, magnificent looking man, followed by the crew of the leading boat.

"I am Junior Lieutenant Robert Tichborne, sir, and have orders to report to Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore, commanding his majesty's yacht Blue Belt," said the new-comer, who was attired in full uniform.

The midshipman saluted, and responded:

"Lieutenant Rossmore has been most anxiously expecting you, sir, and will be glad to see you."

"I will lead you to him, where he stands upon the quarter-deck."

The gay young midgy then escorted the officer aft, and five minutes after his meeting with Reginald Rossmore, orders were given to get up the anchor and set sail.

The men who had come on board in the boats also sprung to work, and soon after the Blue Belt was headed down-stream and gliding swiftly along under an eight-knot breeze, bound upon a cruise that seemed to have banished all care from the face of her young commander, now that his vessel had her sharp bows pointed seaward.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTERIOUS OFFICER.

THE strange officer, who had boarded the king's schooner Blue Belt, was a striking looking personage, who would have been more readily taken for the commander, rather than the junior lieutenant of the vessel, for he was a man much older than was Reginald Rossmore, and had that in his face which proved he had passed through a great deal in his life, and knew the world well.

Reginald had so lately risen to the rank of commanding a vessel, that, though he knew himself to be competent, he was then willing to avail himself of the seemingly far greater experience of his senior in years, if not in rank, and was drawn toward him with a most friendly regard besides.

As the fleet schooner dropped the land astern, and headed across the ocean, Reginald Rossmore sat in his cabin with the junior lieutenant, the deck being in charge of a midshipman acting as third officer.

"I will now break my sealed dispatches, and see if I am really ordered as I hoped I would be, and believed, to America," said the young commander, taking up the official documents brought him by Robert Tichborne from the king, with orders to open them when at sea.

Breaking the seal his face lighted up with pleasure, as he read aloud:

"You are ordered to proceed in his majesty's schooner of war Blue Belt, direct to the Carolinas, and report to his excellency, Sir Henry Malcolm, Governor of the colony, after which you are to cruise from Cape Hatteras to the West Indies in search of the buccaneers and outlaws raiding upon his majesty's commerce upon the high seas."

"Well, this is an honor I little expected, Lieutenant Tichborne, for I deemed that I was placed in command of the Blue Belt, merely to run her across the ocean to Commodore Lord Trenholm, who was to place an officer in command of her for some secret service."

"It seems that the king has confidence in you, sir," was the calm reply.

"I hope that I shall continue to merit it."

"There is no doubt of that; but you saved one of his majesty's vessels, I believe?"

"I ran her out of a dangerous harbor, where the chances were that she would have been wrecked in a storm," was the modest response.

"And I believe there is another service the king wished to reward you for?"

"Yes, the vessel in which I came over was chased by a pirate, and a ruse of mine saved her, and also captured the outlaw craft, and the packet-ship's commander made a most kind report of it, and for that the king doubtless now sends me back to America."

"Then you are lately from America?"

"Yes."

"From what part may I ask?"

"I have been stationed at the Carolinas."

"Ah!" and a strange look passed over the face of the lieutenant, while he continued in his pleasant way:

"I am surprised that you wished to leave, as all of the officers like America greatly."

"I did not care to leave," and Reginald blushed as he said so.

"But, Lord St. Ledger, the fleet commander thought he was doing me a kindness, I suppose, for a little service I rendered to him, in ordering me home."

"And now I am sorry I came, for since my arrival I had a letter from a young brother officer, who gave me sad tidings."

"Indeed! a lady in the case, doubtless?" insinuated Tichborne with his sweetest smile.

"To be frank, there is, and one whom, since my departure, I learn is engaged to marry another."

"Who that other is, my friend did not state; but he hinted that rank and wealth had won the day against me, and I am most anxious to

get back to see if it is the lady's own free will to cast me aside, or whether she acts by the command of her father."

An unfathomable look passed over the face of the strange officer, for Reginald Rossmore, good reader of human nature though he was, could not fathom it, and for the first time he saw something in the expression of his lieutenant not to like.

In a deep tone, as though from suppressed feelings, Robert Tichborne said slowly:

"Lieutenant Rossmore, I have found out that it is best never to trust man or woman, ay, not even myself."

"Take my advice and do likewise, for those we deem our best friends, are at heart often our worst foes."

"I should be pained ever to have to take that view of my fellow-beings," said Reginald.

"Some day you will find that I am right," and with this remark the strange man left the cabin and ascended to the deck, a deep shadow resting upon his face.

What he had said, in spite of himself, deeply impressed Reginald Rossmore, and he paced the cabin anxious and with a foreboding of evil.

A short year before he had been happy, in his way, living at Rossmore Castle.

His father was a morose, selfish man, living among his books, and to satiate his palate with luxuries.

Outside of his suite of rooms the baronet seldom went, and Reginald knew little of him.

The wild chase, the sail in a storm, breasting the billows in a daring swim, had been his enjoyments, and though he longed for a more ambitious life, he did not render himself too unhappy because it was not in his grasp.

He knew the small revenue of the estate went for his father's wants and his own, few as they were, and that he would be left a ruin, a pittance, and a title at the death of the baronet.

But his bold rescue of the vessel-of-war had opened a new field for him, and his meeting with Coraline Malcolm had taught him to love.

Instantly he became ambitious to rise in the world, to win rank, a name and a fortune for her; and, far more rapidly than he had hoped, he was ascending the ladder of fame.

The very sending him to England as a dispatch-bearer by Sir Henry and Lord St. Ledger had worked for his good, as he had on the way over not only saved the packet ship from capture but captured, by a clever ruse, the pirate who believed he had the vessel in his power.

Now, going back to the Carolinas with dread and hope commingled, exalted above his wildest dreams of what he could rise to before long years, he was told by one whom he liked, whose experience he had faith in, to put no trust in man or woman.

It was a severe blow to the young officer, and he brooded in bitterness as he paced to and fro, with shadows already darkening the horizon of his life.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHANGE OF COMMANDERS.

THE Blue Belt had run half her way across the ocean, and the strange officer, Robert Tichborne, had proven himself a thorough seaman and had won popularity with all on board, notwithstanding that he was a silent, stern man, and seemed given to moodiness.

The younger officers of the vessel asserted that he was "a man with a history," and so his appearance and manner implied.

But he was ever courteous to all, and at times had proven himself a good talker and genial companion.

Reginald Rossmore seemed more and more impressed with the man, and had invited him to share his cabin with him, an honor the lieutenant appeared to appreciate.

One night, as the schooner was sailing quietly along under a light breeze and eight bells had just been struck, Robert Tichborne entered the cabin, where his young commander was seated engaged in the pleasant occupation of thrumming a guitar and singing snatches of various songs of the sea, the camp and of love.

The lieutenant threw himself into an easy-chair, and, to the surprise of Reginald, suddenly joined him in a song, singing in a rich voice that was strangely sympathetic.

He had not before shown that he possessed any musical powers, and instantly the song was concluded, Reginald handed to him the guitar with a request to sing.

He took the instrument with a smile, ran his fingers skillfully over the strings, and burst forth in a melody that was stirring in the extreme.

Rising without a word, when the song was completed, he walked to and fro across the cabin, seemingly not hearing his commander's words of praise.

Suddenly he halted in front of Reginald Rossmore, and said in his calm way:

"Lieutenant Rossmore, do you remember that I told you never to trust man or woman?"

"I do."

"And you did not heed my advice?"

"I heeded it so little, Tichborne, that I would now trust you under any and all circumstances," was the frank response.

The lieutenant smiled, and then said:

"Let me tell you of a misplaced trust and friendship, if you will listen?"

"Certainly, with pleasure."

"I will speak of no names, or time, but simply say that a young officer of the navy was given command of a vessel in which to sail upon an important duty."

"He had not seen the craft of which he was to take command, or met an officer or seaman thereon, until he repaired on board, with orders to await an addition to his quarter-deck and fore-castle."

"That addition came, and an officer brought him orders to sail at once upon his mission."

"He did so, and his heart felt full of pride at his success in rising to the command of a swift vessel."

"This seems strangely like my case, Tichborne," said Reginald, with a smile.

"There is a similarity, it is true; but hear me, please."

"That officer who brought sealed orders to the young commander was playing a deep game."

"In the first place he was not what he represented himself not being in the Royal Navy at all."

"Once he had been, but he had left it in disgrace long before."

"He learned from his hiding-place, for he dared not boldly walk the streets, that the vessel was to sail, and a spy reported to him the exact circumstances."

"Instantly he laid a plot to sail upon the craft."

"It was a well-planned scheme, for he successfully led into a trap the officer who was carrying the sailing orders on board, accompanied by his men, who were to reinforce the crew."

"They were led into an Inn, while waiting for boats to carry them on board, invited to drink, and their liquor being drugged, they became unconscious, and the lieutenant was robbed of his letters and dispatches."

"Then this disgraced naval officer assumed the role of the one who had been sent on this duty by his king and the admiralty."

"The base ingrate," said Reginald Rossmore, sternly.

"So it would seem that he was, but he accomplished his base work, for he was not suspected, and sailed in the fleet vessel as her second officer."

"But what was his motive, Tichborne?"

"That he also accomplished, Lieutenant Rossmore."

"But what was it?" persisted Reginald.

"To seize the vessel."

"And he did so?"

"Yes."

"For what purpose?"

"To use her as a means of revenge against one he had reason to hate with all the intensity of his nature."

"Ah!"

"And for another purpose."

"Well?"

"To gain a fortune with her upon the high seas, if such a course was necessary."

"In other words, turn pirate?"

"True."

"And he died at the yard-arm of one of his majesty's cruisers, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, though such may one day be his fate."

"He deserves such a death, and were I to run across this pirate's path I would strike him up without mercy," said Reginald Rossmore, hotly.

"You will not have that honor, Lieutenant Rossmore, for the pirate stands before you."

The words were uttered with the utmost coolness, and with a bound Reginald Rossmore was upon his feet.

But a pistol was leveled in his face, and then came the stern words:

"Hold! surrender or you die, for this craft is in my possession, your honest officers and men being in irons below decks!"

"Great God! can this be possible?" and in spite of his deadly danger Reginald's hand rested upon his sword-hilt.

The reply of the self-proclaimed pirate was to call out:

"Hol on deck there!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered a man, who quickly sprung down the companionway.

"Talbot, tell this gentleman who commands this craft," quietly asked Robert Tichborne.

"You do, Captain Tichborne," was the response.

"And his officers and crew, where are they?"

"In irons in the hold."

"Enough."

The man Talbot retired, and turning to Reginald, who was livid with rage, Tichborne continued:

"You had, sir, but twenty men on board, with two middies."

"I brought with me thirty men and two junior officers, and my plans were so well laid, I was so thoroughly trusted by you, in spite of my advice, that I seized your schooner half an hour ago, while you were singing, without firing a shot and with the death of but one of your

crew, whom I was forced to run through the body and throw overboard.

"I mean you no harm, Lieutenant Rossmore, for I shall land you and your men in America.

"But your vessel I must have, for in her I have work to do.

"Now, sir, you are at liberty to go where you please about the vessel, occupying this cabin as my guest."

"Pardon me, but I prefer to be the prisoner rather than the guest of a pirate," was the stinging remark.

"As you please, sir."

"I do so please, and beg that you have me ironed and put below with my men."

"It shall be as you wish.

"Ho, the deck!"

"Ay, ay, captain," and Talbot again appeared.

"Place irons upon this gentleman and lead him to a place of confinement with his crew."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the work was done with a celerity that bespoke for the man much practice in just such deeds.

CHAPTER IX.

A PIRATE PROTECTED.

I WILL now return to the schooner that saved the Governor-Commandant, Sir Henry Malcolm, and his guests with him upon the wrecked pleasure craft.

As the reader has doubtless surmised, the schooner was none other than the Blue Belt, and her commander was Robert Tichborne, who had seized her upon the high seas.

As the Blue Belt neared the fort-guarded entrance to the harbor of Charleston, Carter, the sailing-master of the Coraline, took the wheel, for he knew the channel thoroughly, and when it was seen that the fortress was preparing to throw a shot across the forefoot of the vessel to make her show her colors, the private flag of the Governor, which had been brought from the yacht, was run up to the fore.

But only for an instant, and then down it came with a run, by order of the strange man who commanded the destinies of the beautiful little craft.

Instantly the fort thundered forth a salute to the Governor, and the Blue Belt went on up the harbor, dropping anchor at last just off the grand old mansion which for years had been the home of the Provincial Governors.

"Lower away third cutter!" called out Tichborne as the anchor was let fall, and the cry came from a young reefer forward:

"Third cutter away!"

The boatswain's whistle piped shrilly the call to the crew of the cutter, and in two minutes the boat was at the starboard gangway.

The gangway was lined by the crew, and over the side went the pirate's guests one by one.

The Governor stood by the side of Tichborne, bearing upon his arm his daughter, who was enveloped in wraps and held her head down, as though her thoughts were far away.

One by one the wrecked party departed, the Governor and Coraline awaiting to the last.

"All ready, sir," said Carter, quietly, to Sir Henry.

"Very well. Come, Coraline!"

The maiden raised her head quickly, and in the darkening twilight gazed straight into the face of the man before her.

Then, stretching forth her hand, she grasped that of Robert Tichborne, and said, firmly:

"I meant not to be rude, sir, and I beg your forgiveness for not telling you how deeply I appreciate your noble act in saving my life.

"I know that my fat her, with myself, will be glad to see you at the mansion whenever you visit our port.

"Good by!"

The man made no reply, but simply bowed low, and Sir Henry handed his daughter over the side, while he waved a farewell to the pirate captain, and tossed to the crew his purse well filled with gold.

A moment more, and the coxswain sung out:

"Let fall!"

The oars dropped into the water as one, and then came the command:

"Give way, men!"

Away went the cutter shoreward, and pacing the deck with slow, measured stride, Robert Tichborne awaited its return.

It soon came back, and, springing into it, the pirate chief ordered the coxswain to pull for the upper piers, opposite the town.

Landing, he bade the coxswain await his return, and drawing his cloak around him, he strode up the lantern-lighted street in the direction of the principal inn.

Entering the tap-room, he called for a bottle of wine, and was enjoying its contents, when suddenly there entered several officers in full uniform.

Walking to a table near by, they took seats and the senior of them hastily called for wine and food.

"I have no time to eat now, gentlemen, so with a glass of wine will leave you.

"But you enjoy your first supper ashore after our cruise across, while I go and see the Governor and learn if the Blue Belt has arrived,"

and dashing off a glass of wine, the officer left the inn.

Robert Tichborne heard the words distinctly, and at once arose, after the departure of the speaker, paid his score at the bar, and followed swiftly upon his track.

But the other was a brisk walker, and he entered the Governor's mansion, while yet his follower was in the grounds.

Seeing this, Tichborne hesitated an instant, and then, seeking the shelter of the evergreens, he made a short circuit and reached a wing of the house which was brilliantly lighted up.

The guard upon duty at the front portal had not seen him, and as a large oleander grew against the window overlooking the garden, it afforded a secure shelter for the intruder.

Standing in its shadow, he glanced within the room and beheld the Governor seated at a table near by, looking over some official papers which had evidently arrived during his short and fateful cruise in his unfortunate yacht.

A lamp shed its light upon him, and the watcher saw him turn as the door opened and a liveried servant appeared.

The window sash was partially raised, for the night was balmy, and Robert Tichborne heard the servant announce a visitor, the Governor decline to receive him, and then the remark:

"It is a naval captain, sir, and he says he has just arrived from England, Sir Henry."

"Ah! that alters the case, for I thought it was some citizen.

"Ask him in, Kendrick."

The servant disappeared, and soon after there entered the same officer whom Robert Tichborne had seen at the inn, and whose remark caused him to so quickly follow him.

He was a man of thirty, with a frank, handsome face and fine form.

He saluted the Governor courteously, and introduced himself as Captain Frank De Foe, of his majesty's brig-of-war, Surf Bird.

Sir Henry, ever courteous, received him kindly, bade him be seated, and called for a decanter of wine and silver goblets.

"I congratulate you upon your arrival in safety, Captain De Foe," said Sir Henry.

"Thank you, your excellency, and we have made a remarkable run over, for I came in chase of the king's yacht, which, on account of her speed was selected for a special service, and was then run off with by a most daring villain."

"Indeed! you surprise me, sir."

"It was a surprise to all of us, sir; but the truth is the king fancied a young officer, who several times has done him most valuable service, and placed him in command, having promoted him to a lieutenantcy, of his own yacht, with instructions to come to the American shores to hunt down the fleet rovers to be found here.

"The vessel was most thoroughly armed and equipped, but was short of men, and Lieutenant Rossmore had orders to man her completely on this side."

"Lieutenant Rossmore, did you say, sir?" asked the Governor, with a slight start.

"Yes, sir, Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore, of whom you might have heard."

"Yes, I have heard of him, and in fact he was stationed here, but was ordered home with dispatches for saving the life of Commodore, Lord Trenholm St. Ledger.

"So his majesty promoted him and sent him back in command of his own royal yacht?"

"He promoted him, Sir Henry, for having saved the royal mail ship from pirates, and was to have sent him over here.

"But some villainous pirate learned of the plan, and, by a clever ruse got the officer and his men, who were going to reinforce the yacht, into his power, drugged them, stole the official papers, and reporting on board to Lieutenant Rossmore, that young gentleman, doubtless suspecting no wrong, at once put to sea.

"Recovering consciousness the officer found how he had been served, and upon his coat-sleeve was pinned a piece of paper upon which was written:

"Would you seek the king's yacht, Blue Belt, her cruising-ground will be upon the American coast, and her commander the one who seizes her by this clever trick upon the bearer of his majesty's dispatches, and who will readily deceive the officer in command and thus be master of the situation."

"Here is the paper, sir!"

He handed the slip of paper to the Governor as he spoke, and with the first glance at the writing he gave a slight cry of amazement.

"Do you recognize the handwriting, Sir Henry?"

"No, though it looked strangely familiar at first.

"No—it cannot be the one I thought," and the Governor was livid from some deep emotion that seemed to almost overpower him.

"The officer," continued Captain De Foe, "at once sought the presence of the king, and made known what had happened.

"He could not be really censured, for he had entered the inn with his men, to take a *bon voyage* glass, while awaiting the coming of the boats to carry him to the yacht, and the wine that he drank had been drugged.

"It was hours before he recovered consciousness, and not until the following morning did he gain audience with the king.

"Then I was ordered at once in chase, and not overhauling the schooner, to come on here and report to you, Sir Henry, and remain in these waters until the Blue Belt was retaken."

The Governor heard the story with the deep-pain, and then said:

"Did the officer describe the man who had drugged him?"

"Yes, your excellency—a tall, splendid-looking man, with a long black beard and hair falling in curls upon his shoulders."

"The same, by Heaven!"

"You know him, then?"

"I do."

"He has arrived ahead of me in spite of my speed across?"

"He has."

"Then, sir, let me know where I can find him, and I promise you—"

"Captain De Foe, you will pardon me to-night; but I will grant you an interview in the morning, and then we will talk the matter over.

"The vessel you seek is in port, I will say now: but myself, daughter, and some friends have had a fearful experience to-day, and I am indisposed.

"To-morrow I will see you."

The officer arose, and after another glass of wine departed.

Hardly had the door closed upon him when the Governor walked over toward the window, and standing within a few feet of Robert Tichborne, muttered:

"I must protect the man, pirate though he be, after my promise to do so, and all that he has done for me and mine.

"I dare trust no one to go, and so will go myself out to his vessel and order him to depart at once.

"After that I have done my duty, repaid my debt to him, and he is fair game for the king's cruisers.

"Yes, I will go at once."

CHAPTER X.

A STRANGE INTERVIEW.

"ONE minute, Sir Henry Malcolm!"

With the words the long sash was thrown up and Robert Tichborne sprung in through the open window.

The Governor was fairly startled at the words, and more so at the sudden appearance of the man before him.

Quickly he turned to the table upon which lay his sword, while he said sternly:

"What means this intrusion, sir?"

"My presence, Sir Henry, will prevent your exposing yourself to the night air to warn me that his majesty's wolves are upon my track," was the calm reply of the pirate.

"Ha! you overheard my words?"

"Yes; and all that Captain De Foe said."

"Then you know that I sought to protect you this once, pirate though you be?"

"Yes; and you have my gratitude for it."

"Now, knowing your danger, you will at once depart from this mansion and the port?"

"I will depart, Sir Henry, after I have had an interview with you," was the firm reply.

"I have nothing to say to you, Sir Pirate."

"Yet have I to say to you, Sir Henry."

"Then speak, and then depart."

"First let me be sure there are no listeners, for what I have to say is not for other ears, unless you so will."

As the pirate captain spoke he crossed over to the door leading into the hallway, and coolly turned the key in the lock.

Then he returned and throwing himself into the chair vacated by Captain De Foe, poured out two goblets of wine with the utmost sangfroid, the Governor gazing upon him the while with speechless amazement.

"Your very good health, Governor Sir Henry Malcolm," he said, raising the goblet to his lips. In spite of himself, Sir Henry took up his goblet and touched it to his lips.

"Now be seated, my dear Governor, and let us have a little talk together."

"I have half a mind to call a guard and arrest you, sir, for this bold intrusion," said Sir Henry, sternly.

"It is well, sir, that your mind is not wholly made up to do so, for your guards would but find your dead body, and I would be gone," was the threatening response.

The Governor winced at this, but said:

"I warn you to go while yet you have time."

"Ah, I have plenty of time, my dear Governor; but why this deep interest in me?"

"You saved myself and friends from death, and more, you sprung into the sea and rescued my idolized child from a grave beneath its waters.

"For these acts I would not see you die at the yard-arm; but I warn you, once you have sailed from this port, you are fair game for the king's vessels under my control."

"So be it; but now let us talk business, for I have come across the ocean especially to see you, my dear Sir Henry."

"To see me?"

"Fact."

"In God's name what can there be in common between us?" said the Governor with a sneer.

"Much, I assure you," was the cool reply.

"Pray tell me then, in haste, for I am most anxious to end this interview."

"I will not detain you long, Governor Sir Henry Malcolm, if you will hear me."

"I will listen."

"To begin, I believe you were the nephew of Sir Robert Malcolm, from whom you inherited your wealth and title, instead of his son?"

"What have you to do with that, sir?" hotly asked the Governor.

"Much, as I will show you, for I have come in the interest of one who is the direct heir."

"Bah! there is no other heir than myself."

"Your uncle had two sons, I believe?"

"He did."

"What became of them?"

"One was thrown from his horse, while hunting, and the other was killed battling in Spain, after he had been dismissed from the Royal Navy in disgrace."

"You are sure of this?"

"Yes, for Edgar, the eldest and direct heir, was hunting with me at the time, and I was the one who raised him in my arms and bore him to a tenant's cabin, where he died."

"And Robert?"

"What is all this to you?"

"I told you that I represented the direct heir."

"And I say it is false, for the direct heirs are dead, and as my uncle Malcolm's nephew I inherited the title and estates," warmly said the Governor.

"Tell me what you know of your cousin Robert," quietly asked the pirate.

"I know that he was dismissed from the navy for a crime he committed."

"And that crime?"

"It matters not."

"Very well, let me see if I cannot tell you."

"He gambled heavily in a foreign port, and lost."

"Unable to pay his losses he went to the paymaster and asked him to advance the money, but was refused."

"He then sought the captain, who was his rival for the hand of a fair maid of Portsmouth, and was again refused, and simply from a petty revenge because he had won favor in the eyes of the lady who had slighted his superior officer, as the paymaster and the commander were brothers, and knew that Robert was amply good for his losses when he returned to England."

"That night the paymaster's strong box was broken open and robbed, and the following morning, as your cousin Robert had made good his losses he was accused of the robbery."

"In fact, the exact sum in gold, above the amount of his losses, was found hidden in his chest on board ship."

"In vain he pleaded innocence, for none would believe his story, that he had again gambled, with an unknown officer, won heavily and thus paid his debts."

"Why recall all this, sir?" sternly asked the Governor.

"Be patient, please."

"The unfortunate young man was dismissed the service, then arrested and sent to the London Tower as a convict, sentenced for long years by his king for bringing disgrace upon his proud name."

"I am aware of all this, and a just punishment it was."

"Surely, my dear Sir Henry, had the charge of robbery been true."

"It was true."

"So it seemed; but hear me."

"Your cousin escaped from the Tower, feeling his innocence, and not caring to serve as a convict, when it lay in his power to breathe free air."

"Going to Spain he joined the army there as a private soldier, and under an assumed name was promoted for gallant conduct."

"But he was recognized, and one day as he went into battle, it was reported that he was to be borne back to England as a prisoner."

"That day he won the praise of all by his daring, and just as night came on he fell dead, shot through the heart, it was said."

"And thus he did die," said Sir Henry, peevishly.

"You are mistaken, sir."

"I am not, for his comrades reported him dead, and his body fell into the hands of his foes and was buried by them."

"No, you are wrong."

"I am not, sir!" hotly said the Governor.

"I say yes! Robert Tichborne Malcolm, your cousin, stands before you, Sir Henry Malcolm!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE PIRATE.

WHEN Robert Tichborne, the pirate, made the startling announcement that he was the heir to the title and estates of the late Sir Robert Malcolm, the Governor's face became livid, and he tried to arise from his chair, while he cried in appealing tones:

"No! no! no!"

"I say yes," was the stern rejoinder of the pirate, as he faced the Governor, gazing into his face with burning eyes and a look of triumphant hate.

"But Robert Malcolm was certainly killed."

"It was so believed; but I am he, and you wear my title and squander my riches."

"You cannot prove this, sir," said the Governor, gaining courage.

"Oh, yes I can, or I would never be the fool to come and make my identity known to you."

"Even if you are, I can have the king, with whom my influence is great, will that you are an outcast, and allow me to retain all."

"The king cannot destroy the direct line of inheritance, cousin Henry, no matter what my crimes may have been, for even were I exiled the title and what you have left of the estate must go to my son."

"And have you any son?" eagerly asked the Governor, feeling that the pirate spoke the truth.

"No, for I have never married."

The Governor seemed relieved at this information, but said:

"Why, I am foolish to argue with you, be you even Robert Malcolm, when it is so easy for me to end the whole matter."

"As how, cousin Henry?" sneered the unwelcome intruder.

"By arresting you and sending you back to England to complete your sentence, and, once again in the Tower, I am sure you would never come forth alive."

"I am sure of it."

"But there is a quicker way to settle it than that, Governor-Commandant, for such you are if you are not Sir Henry."

"How is that?" eagerly asked the Governor, catching at a straw of hope, even if thrown by the man he now felt such hatred for.

"Why, simply have me arrested as a pirate, and my execution at the yard-arm would quickly follow."

"By the king, but I'll do it!" almost shouted the Governor.

"By my death then, you know, you would be, of course, Sir Henry," went on the pirate in the coolest manner possible.

"It shall be so," and the Governor moved toward the door as though to summon a guard.

But Robert Tichborne did not move to stop him, but, on the contrary, threw himself back in his chair in a most free and easy manner.

The very coolness of the pirate checked the advance of the Governor.

He felt there was something behind that indifferent air, and he turned with his hand upon the key.

"Will you make me a promise if I do not call for my guard?" he asked.

"What is it you ask, cousin Henry?" came the quiet question.

"That you leave this room as you entered it, at once return on board your schooner, or rather the one you seized, and put to sea."

"I will make no such promise, Governor Malcolm."

"Then your fate be upon your own head," was the determined reply.

Instantly he turned the key, and still the pirate did not move.

But, seeing that the Governor was determined to have him arrested, he said carelessly:

"One moment, please, cousin Henry!"

The Governor turned toward him with an impatient:

"Well, sir?"

"You seek to retain your title and estates by my death, do you not?"

"Yes, and to punish a pirate."

"Bah! punishing crime comes well from your lips," sneered the pirate.

"How dare you speak thus, sir?"

"Because I know to whom I am speaking."

"Insulting still, you are."

"I warn you to have a care."

"I am a man who heeds no warnings, Governor Malcolm."

"But let me ask you, would you not rather retain your prestige with the king, your title, or rather my title and estates, by having me voluntarily retire from the field, or rather Robert Tichborne, as though dead, than to have your own flesh and blood hanged for piracy?"

The Governor was silent and the pirate said sternly:

"Answer me!"

"It could not be done."

"It can."

"I would constantly live in dread that the secret would out."

"That I would betray you?"

"Yes."

"There are no circumstances under which you would trust me?"

"None."

"Then you insist upon having me arrested and hanged as a pirate?"

"I do."

"You will not even allow me to leave port now?"

"No, now that I think of it, for I would constantly fear you," and the Governor began to feel that he was the master now of the situation.

"Suppose I offer to depart now, and never to allow you to hear of me again?"

"You cannot go, sir," and stepping forward, the Governor picked up his sword from the table, and drew it from his sword-belt, while he continued:

"You are my prisoner, Sir Pirate."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MASTER OF THE SITUATION.

ONE would naturally suppose that when Governor Malcolm took the bold stand that he did, determining to sacrifice his relative, if relative he really was, by giving him up to die on the yard-arm, that the pirate would have lost his cool manner and become the pleader for his life.

But instead, when the Governor told him he was his prisoner, Robert Tichborne laughed lightly, and with the air of one that seemed really to enjoy the situation.

This rather nonplused Sir Henry, for he could not see beyond it, but he asked sternly:

"Do you surrender, sir?"

"Certainly not."

"Then I shall run you through, or call the guard."

"You will do nothing so silly, cousin Henry."

"By Heaven, but you shall see!"

"Hold!"

The deep voice uttered the word in a tone that caused the Governor to pause in his intended act, whatever that act might have been.

"Put up your sword, Henry Malcolm, and sit there and talk to me, for frankly, your guard will amount to nothing, did I give the signal to my gallant lads that their chief needed aid."

"Your palatial house here stands apart from others, and before succor could come to you, my vessel could be flying out of the harbor with you a prisoner on board, and all your plate, or rather mine, safely stored in her cabin, did I so will it."

The Governor realized the truth of this, and that the couple of soldiers on duty, and his half dozen men servants would be no match for the pirate crew, did their daring chief call them to him.

"What have you to say to me?" he said, sullenly.

"Be seated, and I will tell you."

Mechanically the Governor obeyed, placing his drawn sword upon the table by him.

"Now speak, sir, for time presses."

"You hold the rank and title due me, Henry Malcolm, and you know it, for though I was a very young man, when we last met, the sorrows I have known, and this full beard that I wear, have not destroyed all trace of my former self."

"There does appear about you something that is familiar, I admit."

"But I do not trace in you the one I knew as Robert Malcolm," replied the Governor.

"Do you recall that when I was a little boy, and you a youth of eighteen, that you pricked into my arm the crest of our house?"

"I do."

"There it is," and the pirate baring his forearm showed upon its muscular breadth, pricked in with India ink, the crest of the Malcolms.

"I cannot doubt it now; but I deemed you dead," said the Governor, in a low tone.

"And wished to God that I was."

"It would be better for you if you were dead, Henry."

"That remains to be seen; but now let me tell you that I intend to make a demand upon you."

"I shall contest the title I hold and the estates," quickly and firmly said the Governor.

"We will see how dearly you prize them, sir; but first let me show that I will make no demand, without proving that I hold you wholly in my power, so that you will know that it is best to accede to my wishes."

"You are mad, if you think I fear your idle threats."

"My threats are never idle, cousin Henry, as you shall know, in your own case, if you refuse to do as I demand."

"We shall see, sir," was the sarcastic response.

"Very well, let me tell you that I do not believe that my elder brother was killed by his fall from his horse."

The Governor started to his feet with a cry of rage, his face livid with passion.

For an instant he seemed about to spring upon the man before him; but a glance was sufficient to show him that the contest would be an unequal one, and he merely hissed forth:

"How dare you assert that my story of his death is untrue?"

"Understand me, Governor Malcolm."

"I do not say that he was not thrown from his horse, for that I know to have been the case."

"You were also hunting with him at that time, and his horse was killed by the fall upon the stone wall."

"And so was Edgar."

"He was stunned by the fall, and I remember that the fatal wound that he had received was upon the temple."

"And that he received in this fall," said the Governor, nervously.

"Not so."

"Then how in Heaven's name did he receive it?"

"I will tell you, if you care to listen."

"Go on, sir."

"Well, you arrived first upon the scene, and beholding Edgar unconscious, and his horse dead, you felt his pulse, listened to the beating of his heart, and believing that the fall had not been fatal you determined to make it so."

"Liar! villain! I will—"

"Sit down!"

A pistol muzzle looked squarely into the face of the Governor as, driven mad by the accusations of the pirate, he sprung upon him.

He loved life, and saw that in the face of Robert Tichborne which told him that he would use the weapon, so he again sunk down in his chair, while the pirate continued:

"To do this, cousin Henry, you took up a large stone and gave poor Edgar one severe rap with it."

"That ended his career, and your first crime to his inheritance had been committed."

"No one doubted that the blow had been received in the fall from his horse, and no one looked further—*excepting myself*."

"It is basely false!" groaned the unhappy Governor.

"Ah, no, it is true."

"You have no proof of this?"

"I have."

"Name your proof."

"Have you forgotten Loring, the tenant upon my father's estate, to whose cabin you bore my poor brother?"

"Hail did he make this accusation against me?"

"No."

"Who then?"

"One day you saved the life of Loring's little son, and the boy fairly idolized you after you pulled him out of the brook."

"The day of Edgar's death he was picking berries in the forest and saw all."

"But he did not tell to a living soul what he saw, because he knew that it would cause you trouble."

"When he grew to be a youth he went to sea, and one night I found him sick, friendless, and with not a shilling in his pocket, wandering about the streets of a foreign port."

"I took him to an inn and cared for him and gave him money, and nursed him back to life, and he told me then that you had killed my poor brother, and had hired him to come to Spain and end my life, I being the barrier between you and rank and fortune."

"He came to Spain to do the work, fired upon me to kill me, and was himself wounded."

"I was severely wounded, and he also, and he had sent word to you from his Spanish prison that the work was done, and begged you to get his release."

"But you deserted the man that made you what you are, and at last he escaped; but ill, penniless, and in a strange land, he would have died, had not I, recovered fully of my wound, met him."

"In gratitude to me he told me all, so that you see I know you as you are, cousin Henry, and will expect you to agree to my terms."

"And that man?" gasped the Governor, who had sat with his face buried in his hands during this recital of his crimes.

"Still lives."

"Where is he?"

"Upon the Blue Belt with me."

"Oh, God, have mercy!" groaned the Governor.

"Bah! don't give way to grief, man."

"Look at me, and see what I have suffered."

"I never robbed the paymaster of my vessel, for he took the gold himself, but placed the crime upon me, and circumstantial evidence ruined me."

"I was dishonored for it, cast off by the woman I loved, and for a long time lay in prison for the crime of which I was not guilty."

"I have lost honor, rank, fortune and all; while you, a murderer and robber, live on the fat of the land, my fortune, revered by all, and the pet of your king."

"Now, such you can remain, if you accept my terms; but if not, I'll drag you down to the perdition of infamy, and make you glad to seek refuge upon my vessel, though she floats the pirate flag."

The calm manner of Robert Tichborne had departed from him, and he paced to and fro before the trembling Governor with flashing eyes, and face as white as marble, while he fairly hissed forth his threatening words.

CHAPTER XIII.

AS FATE LED THEM.

THE sudden change in the manner and tone of the pirate, from cool sarcasm and apparent light-heartedness, to a fierce anger and withering scorn, completely subdued the Governor, who sat with bowed head, his face hidden in his hands, and his attitude that of utter dejection and despair.

He had sinned deeply, yet believing that sin to be hidden forever from the world's gaze, he had sought to repent, and lead a different life.

With a father who was ambitious, and imbibed, because he had not been born the elder son, to instill in him a desire to grasp the title and fortune to be inherited by his cousin Edgar, he had been tempted to become the heir by removing those in his path.

He might never have made an attempt upon his cousin's life, had not the fall from his horse suddenly tempted him to do so.

He had tried to believe that the injuries would have proven fatal, without the blow on the temple with a piece of stone.

But, having taken this step, his next was to get rid of Robert Malcolm.

A fatal circumstance aided in this, for the young man, with a noble, generous nature, had the fault of gambling, and it proved his ruin.

Guiltless of robbing the paymaster's strong box he certainly was, yet so surely did the evidence point to his guilt, so well was the trap laid against him by his rival in love, the vessel's commander, that he was believed to be guilty, and the direst disgrace followed.

Often did the memory that his cousin Robert was languishing in prison come to Henry Malcolm, and he could not but pity him, yet longed to have him out of the way, as the only obstacle between him and the inheritance of title and fortune.

Robert Tichborne, as he was called, had always liked Henry Malcolm, and one day he wrote him a letter, asking him to lay it before the king, that he might come out of his prison in honor.

A strange fatality, said that letter, had brought a man to die in the cell next to Robert Tichborne.

That man had been placed there for killing a fellow-being over a game of cards, and would have been hanged but for the fact that he was then dying with consumption.

One glance through the grating of the cell, and Robert Tichborne recognized the man from whom he had won that money in a foreign port that had enabled him to pay his debts.

He had asked to speak with the dying man, and ever courteous to his keepers, the request had been granted.

The dying man recognized him, recalled the circumstance, and was more than willing to swear before a king's officer to the affair, with dates, amount of money won, and all.

This letter Henry Malcolm had burned at once, and never had it seen the king's eye, for it would not do for Robert Tichborne to come out of prison and claim his own, getting back honor and all.

Thus had his cousin waited in vain, while the dying man at last drew his last breath, and the truth was silenced forever.

Bitter indeed did this cause the convict to feel against his cousin, and when at last he managed to make his escape and endeavor to lead an honest life as a common soldier, again did cruel fate dog his steps, and recognized as Robert Tichborne, the escaped felon, he would have been taken back to his cell in the Tower, had not he fallen severely wounded, and, as was believed and reported, dead.

Escaping death, he became a wanderer, and the reader is aware what he heard from the lips of one who had given him that wound, hired to do so by Henry Malcolm, who had heard that he was serving in the army in Spain, and sent him there to kill him.

It was no wonder, then, that the hunted man, knowing his own innocence, became desperate, and wandered listlessly about until at last he found himself upon the deck of an American pirate.

With power, he thirsted for revenge, and going back to England, he sought to get possession of a suitable vessel, and accident placed the Blue Belt in his hands, while, following the chain of fatality, he became the rescuer of his cousin, the Governor, and his daughter, against whom he sought retribution.

As the two men thus faced each other, memory crowded upon them, and each in his own mind drew the contrast.

One was a murderer and a robber, and the path of crime had led him to honor and wealth.

The other had been driven by cruel destiny from honor to crime and despair.

Now they stood face to face, the wronger and the wronged, what would be the end?

One longed to save what he had and still live on under the mark of honor.

The other sought revenge, and would have it at any cost.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PIRATE'S TERMS.

"SPARE me!"

The words were said imploringly and no one who knew the proud Governor, would have believed the face raised to the pirate to have been his.

He had thought over rapidly his past, and the hope for the future, with all its despair if that hope failed.

Before him was a man, his own kin, who, whatever might have been his innocence in the past, was certainly then a pirate, and as such, must be willing to be bought off at some price.

Robert Tichborne smiled grimly at the words of the Governor and at once all the angry vehemence left him, and he became once more the cold, satirical man, as he said:

"It is a great joy in my heart, my cousin, to hear you pleading to me."

"Perhaps my poor brother Edgar pleaded to you to spare him, when he lay helpless before you; but you were merciless, where I will be merciful."

"You will spare me then?" and the Governor sprung to his feet and stood in pitiful pleading before the man who held him so thoroughly in his power.

"Sit down and hear me," was the cold reply.

Down the Governor dropped once more in his chair.

"You ask me to spare you?"

"Yes, oh yes!"

"I could send you to England to hang for murder."

"Alas! I know it."

"I could send you to my cell in the Tower to remain for life, for robbing me of my own, pirate though I be."

"You could, I confess it."

"I could take you from your home here now and hang you to the yard-arm of my vessel, in pure revenge."

"Yes."

"I could force from you a confession of the wrongs done me, and Frank De Foe also that he stole the money I was charged with taking, and, no one knowing what I have been, I could go back in honor to my rank and fortune."

"You could."

"But I do not care to do this, for having sinned as I have, since I have been driven to piracy, I will be content to have it remain as though Robert Tichborne was dead in reality, and, under an assumed name live a different life."

The Governor looked at him in surprise, as these words fell from his lips.

"But," he continued, speaking with the utmost deliberation, "I told you that I had terms to propose to you."

"Yes, yes."

"Those terms, if you accept them, will enable you to live on here in honor as Governor-Commandant, retain your title of Sir Henry, and still keep the estates justly mine."

"You are most generous."

"I know I am, Henry; it has always been one of my failings."

"Well, what do you ask in return?"

"You have a daughter?"

The Governor again became livid, while he gasped forth:

"Yes."

"You have not allowed her to follow the bent of her will, and become the affianced of one whom she loves, and a noble, gallant young fellow, from whom I took my vessel."

"He is unknown and poor."

"Bah! he is now a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, as handsome as an Apollo, as brave as a lion, and true as steel, while he is now a pet of the king, and at the death of his old father will have the Sir you so highly prize before his name, while, my word for it, his sword will carve out for him a fortune."

"But she is the affianced of a great naval commander and a nobleman of high rank."

"The fleet commodore of this station, Lord Trenholm St. Ledger?"

"Yes."

"I learned as much from what I heard from your guests on your ill-fated yacht."

"He is a pompous fool, stern as a savage chief, and will make her most unhappy."

"Still, she is his promised wife."

"Promises are easily broken."

"And you expect me to break off with Lord St. Ledger?"

"Yes."

"This young Rossmore must have sold you the schooner cheap that you look so after his interest," sneered the Governor.

"Silence, sir! He is a man whose honor you are unable to appreciate."

"I took the schooner from him, and he has been in irons in the hold ever since."

"But you seem to drift wide of the channel I am running in, for I am not interesting myself in young Rossmore."

"Then why wish me to have my daughter break with Lord St. Ledger?"

"Because she cannot marry two men."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have another husband in view for her."

"Reginald Rossmore?"

"No."

"Who, then?"

"Myself!"

The reply was given most coolly, and it fairly stunned the Governor, who sunk back in his chair once more, his eyes staring wildly at the daring man before him.

"Yourself?" he gasped.

"Yes."

"No, no! you do not mean it!"

"I do."

"But you are a—"

"Pirate—yes."

"And Coraline, my child, is—"
 "The daughter of a murderer, a robber and a villain," was the calm reply.
 The Governor winced at this, but said again:
 "No, no!"
 "I say yes; for your daughter would now be dead were it not for me."
 "I loved her at sight. I saved her; and I saw, what you failed to see, that she sought to die; rather death than become the wife of the man you selected for her."
 "I do not ask her to become the wife of the pirate, but my wife in my new character."
 "I have saved up some money from my piracies before I went to England, and the other day captured a prize of great value."
 "I will sail to-night, and soon return as a Cuban planter, buying an estate and slaves near here, and as such seek your daughter's hand; and you will bestow her upon me."
 "With my sweet cousin Coraline as my wife, I will live an honest life."
 "But she will know you as—"
 "No, for you see this grand black beard that I wear, and these long curling locks shall all come off, leaving only my mustache, and, as Robert Tichborne is dead you know, and I will speak Spanish and broken English, no one will recognize me as myself, or as the pirate who rescued you from your sinking yacht."
 "I cannot consent to this sacrifice," firmly said the Governor.
 "And this is your decision?"
 "It is."
 "Hear me, cousin Henry."
 "I sail from port to-night; but I shall come back soon in the person of Don Sarano Sagarta, a Cuban planter, and give you one more chance to accept my terms."
 "If you refuse me then beware, for you will find me revengeful and merciless."
 "Buenas noches, *Señor Excelencia*," and with a low, mocking bow, as he spoke the parting words in Spanish the pirate walked to the open window, sprang lightly out, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SACRIFICE.

FOR some minutes after the departure of Robert Tichborne, the Governor-Commandant remained silent and depressed.

He had refused to grant the terms of the pirate; but it was not from a desire to save his daughter, so much as his self, and carry out his own ambitious views for the future.

He did not believe that his cousin would act without again appealing to him, and when he came in a new guise it would be time enough for him to agree to his terms, and sacrifice Coraline.

In the meantime all that he needed was time, and he hoped to do much if allowed to plot and carry out his ideas to rid himself of the hated outlaw.

Rising suddenly to his feet, he said triumphantly:

"He will not carry out his threats against me, for his neck is in the same noose with mine."

"He will carry out his threat, sir!"

The Governor uttered a cry of real alarm, as the words broke upon his ears, and turning quickly beheld the speaker.

Clothed in a snow-white *robe-de-chambre*, Coraline, his daughter, stood before him.

She was holding aside the heavy velvet curtain that fell across the entrance to a back room of the wing, in which was the Governor's official reception-chamber.

The inner room was sacred to his privacy; but thither Coraline of course had *entree* whenever she desired it.

It opened into another hall that led to her chambers, and from thence she had evidently come.

Her face was white, cold and stern, and her eyes full of fire, as she gazed upon her conscience-stricken father, who seemed utterly unnerved by her coming.

"How long had she been there?"

"Did she hear all?"

"What will become of me?"

Such were the questions that flashed through the burning brain of the unhappy man.

"Coraline! I thought you had retired, after your fatigues and excitements of the day," he said in a low tone.

"I intended to do so, father; but came to bid you good-night, and more, I wished to tell you how unhappy I was at the thought of becoming the wife of Lord St. Ledger."

"I sought you here, for Kendrick told me you had had a visitor, who had departed, and was alone."

"I came through your retreat-room, and hearing voices I was about to retire, when there came to my ears words that held me spell-bound."

"Oh God!" groaned the Governor, his heart overwhelmed with anguish, for he felt that his daughter knew all.

Sinking into a chair, he leant his arm upon the table and buried his face upon it, the very picture of remorse and sorrow.

"Standing behind that curtain," continued Coraline, in the same low, but firm tone:

"I heard the story of the man who had saved my life the day just past."

"I heard how a cruel fate had dogged his steps, and, from a hunted man, accused of crime he had not been guilty of, he had sought again to rise among honorable men under another name, but was shot down and left for dead."

"I learned, that when he knew who was his bitterest foe, he became reckless and went to the bad."

"I pity that man, father, for he was hardly treated, and I pity you, that you should have fallen so low as to kill and rob to gain the high position you hold before men."

"Coraline!"

"Nay, father; do not be stern toward me, for you have no right to."

"I heard more, that the one you sent away because I loved him, and he loved me, was not faithless as you led me to believe, and is now a prisoner, in irons, upon Robert Tichborne's vessel."

"Coraline, my child, spare me!" groaned the Governor.

"Father, I am no traitress, and your secret is safe with me."

"But I know well that Robert Tichborne will betray you, if you do not come to his terms!"

"He will never do so."

"He will, so do not hug that hope to your heart."

"He will betray you, even if he had to hang for it, and for the sake of the honor the world believes you to possess, let us ward off this fearful blow."

"But how can we, my child, how can we?" and the Governor raised his white face and quivering lips to the view of his daughter.

"By making the sacrifice."

"What sacrifice?"

"Giving me to him."

"Never!"

"Yes, for you owe him much, and I, as the daughter of the man who was the cause of his ruin, owe it to him."

"He says that he loves me, and to-day he did a bold act to save my life."

"He is a brave man, and tried to be a good man, and he says that under an assumed name he will win me, and that then his life shall be different, and I believe that it will."

"I love another, but, pirate that he is, I respect Robert Tichborne and I will bury all hope and become his wife."

"Then, father, his title you can wear in safety, his fortune you can live on, and all will be well save your conscience and my sorrow."

"Now say no more, for I am determined to make the sacrifice, and it remains with you to break off the bond between Lord St. Ledger and myself."

"But, Coraline, what excuse have I to offer him?"

"Tell him that Coraline Malcolm distinctly refuses to become Lady Trenholm St. Ledger," was the proud reply, as the maiden swept from the room, leaving her father almost crushed by fear, remorse and shame.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GOVERNOR'S PLOT.

GOVERNOR MALCOLM was a man of expedients, and had the happy faculty of quickly casting off any depression or sorrow that came upon him.

Consequently it was but a few moments after the departure of Coraline from his room before he realized that what was done could not be undone, and that the best way to counteract all trouble that might follow, was to plot and execute.

Instantly he touched his silver bell for Kendrick.

But that worthy, believing that the Governor was taking a quiet nap in his easy-chair, as was often his wont, was enjoying forty winks of sleep curled up upon a tiger-robe mat in the hall, and did not hear the tinkling summons.

"Kendrick!" yelled the Governor through the hall, when his second ringing of the bell was unanswered.

"Coming, sir," shouted Kendrick, with professional promptness, and, feeling assured that the Governor had rung for him, although he had not heard it, he said:

"I was outside, sir, seeing that all was closed up for the night."

"Next time, sir, do not wear that tiger mat about your shoulders, for, as you know, it was a present to me from the king, and I prize it most highly."

The tiger robe dropped to the floor, for Kendrick, half-awake, half-asleep, had seized the mat as he arose to his feet.

"Go out, sir, and see if the schooner is yet at anchor off the mansion."

"Yes, sir," and Kendrick disappeared, while, sitting down to his desk, the Governor wrote a hasty note as follows:

"EXECUTIVE MANSION, }
 Midnight."

"TO CAPTAIN FRANK DE FOE,

Commanding H. M. Brig-of-War Surf Bird.

"SIR:—Since your departure I have learned that the vessel you seek is the one that rescued myself and party of friends off the harbor in the storm of the early afternoon."

"We deemed her a Government vessel, and she ran into port with us and anchored off my mansion—"

"Well, Kendrick?" and the Governor turned to his servant, who just then entered the room.

"She is anchored off the mansion still, sir."

"Does she show any signs of sailing?"

"No, sir, for all is quiet on board."

"Very well."

"Now go and get your hat and coat and bear this letter up into the town for me."

"Find out where the brig-of-war Surf Bird lies at anchor, and give into her commander's hands my letter."

"Yes, Sir Henry."

Then the Governor continued his letter:

"—where she now lies, and shows no indication of getting under way."

"It is my wish that you at once run down and attack her, and if her commander is captured alive string him up to the yard-arm of your vessel without an instant's delay, and with him swinging there anchor in front of the town, that he may be an example of how we intend to deal with pirates in the Carolinas."

"As he is said to have a large and desperate crew on board, it would be better, perhaps, to fire upon him grape at short range, for the damage to the vessel would be slight in comparison to the good you would do in ridding the seas of so many buccaneers."

"I will be glad to have you breakfast with me in the morning at ten sharp."

"With consideration,

Your obedient servant,

"MALCOLM,

Governor-Commandant."

After placing his official seal upon this precious document, which he hoped would be the cause of the speedy death of Robert Tichborne, the Governor dispatched Kendrick upon his errand, greatly to that worthy's disgust, and then began to pace to and fro, his face wreathed with a smile of triumph, for he did not doubt but that his plot would prove successful.

"Once Robert Tichborne is dead, should the lesser villain, Loring, survive, I can buy him off from telling what he knows."

"And egad! that De Foe has the name of being a desperate fighter, and I hope will blow the schooner out of the water, and thus kill all. If not, I trust the hot fire he pours upon her will kill that young Reginald Rossmore—a prisoner below decks—and that will end him."

"Then, my Lord St. Ledger, the field is open to you," and the Governor's spirits rose rapidly for already he looked upon the end as at hand for his triumph.

CHAPTER XVII.

A VALUABLE HOSTAGE.

CAPTAIN FRANK DE FOE was so delighted at having made a wonderfully rapid run across the Atlantic that, after his return from his visit to the Governor, he again sought the Oleander Inn where he had left his companions to get supper.

He had half an idea that he would catch the Governor at tea, and that when his name was sent in he would be asked in, when the double pleasure would be in store for him of a social call as well as an official one, and that he would sample some of the old wines with which the Malcolm cellars were so well stocked.

He returned to find his brother officers, and his juniors in rank, consisting of a lieutenant, the surgeon and paymaster of his vessel, just finishing their supper.

They had enjoyed their meal greatly, for the Oleander was noted for its good repasts, and the captain was easily persuaded to order supper for himself, while his companions smoked their cigars and sipped their port, which mine host of the tavern informed them was older than any one of the party.

This they did not gainsay, but they were in a mood to enjoy it had it been far younger.

A broiled fish, some roast duck and a few other edibles, washed down by a tankard of wine, were heartily enjoyed by the naval captain, and then the party discussed their run over, the probabilities of their capture of the stolen schooner, and the hope that they would enjoy their visit to his majesty's American colonies, until the market bell tolled midnight.

Then they started to return to their vessel, promising mine host of the Oleander that they would be ashore to breakfast with him in the morning.

"Pardon me, your honors, but may I ask if any of you will be so good as to direct me how to find Captain De Foe?"

The speaker was Kendrick, and he addressed the surgeon as he stepped out of the inn.

"Yes, my man, here is Captain De Foe himself," was the reply.

Recognizing the officer whom he had seen at the mansion a few hours before, Kendrick handed him the letter he had for him.

Instantly the seal was broken, with a some-

what unsteady hand and the contents were perused with haste.

"Present my compliments to the Governor, Sir Henry, my man, and say that I will do as he requests.

"Come, gentlemen, aboard ship at once, for there is work ahead of us," and so saying Captain De Foe led the way to the landing, off which his vessel lay at anchor.

A boat awaited them, the crew of which, like their officers, had evidently been imbibing sundry potations of ale in a sailor's inn near by, and springing into the stern sheets the commander gave the order to pull hard for the brig.

The moment his foot touched the deck he called for the crew to be piped on deck, the anchor to be got up, the sails set, and the men to prepare for action.

All was seemingly a scene of confusion; but out of the apparent chaos order came, and in ten minutes the brig was moving down the harbor in fighting trim, and under the pressure of a six-knot breeze.

She was a beautiful craft, a little weather-beaten, for she had just returned from a cruise when ordered to go in chase of the Blue Belt; but her officers and men were proud of her as the swiftest vessel in the royal navy.

She carried six brass eighteens to a side, a thirty-two bow-chaser, and two stern-chasers of twenty-four-pound caliber, with a crew of a hundred and twenty men, so that she would be a formidable adversary for a craft of even much larger tonnage.

Down the dark and silent harbor she sped, gliding through the fleet of vessels at anchor and past the glimmering lights of the town, until soon there loomed up the grand mansion of the Governor, with its bowers of trees surrounding it.

Every eye was now searching for the schooner, for the mission of the brig had been told, and suddenly the lookout called down from his lofty perch:

"Schooner ho!"

"Whereaway?" answered Captain De Foe in the same suppressed tones.

"Close inshore, sir, and in line with that large mansion," was the answer.

"I see him now."

"I had feared he had given us the slip; but he lies just in a line with the mansion, so that I dare not fire upon him."

"Perhaps if we run by, Captain De Foe, we can gain a point from which we can train our guns upon him, without damaging the mansion," said the first-luff.

"True, and I will hold on as I am, for we are sure of the fellow, as he lays in that little cove," answered the captain.

But when the brig had run in closer, and forged by, the town came directly in range, and the British captain saw with chagrin that he could not use his heavy guns upon the schooner, and said fretfully:

"Curse him, I'll have to take him with my boats!"

"Can we not run in under shortened sail and board him, sir?" asked the first-luff.

"By Neptune! that might be possible; but sound the depth of water, Mr. Lindsley, and see if we have the water to do so."

This order was obeyed, and with the result that the brig was found to have but half a fathom under her keel.

"Too bad! pipe the boats away, Mr. Lindsley, and I will lead the attack myself!"

While the brig was brought to and the boats were being lowered, the schooner lay dark and silent half a mile inshore, and apparently not a cable's length from the beach.

The movements of the brig were either not seen by those on board, to all appearances, or were not regarded as dangerous.

Having gotten the crew, armed to the teeth, in the boats, the captain gave the command in a low tone:

"Give way, men!"

"Yonder schooner is the prize you seek!"

The oars dropped together and the boats began to move forward to the attack.

When they drew nearer, a young officer, who had sailed upon the king's yacht, said:

"It is the Blue Belt, Captain De Foe, for I know her as I do my mother's face."

"Then we are making no mistake."

"Pull together, men, and with a will!" was the eager reply.

But suddenly over the dark waters came the ringing hail:

"Boats ahoy!"

Involuntarily every oar was poised in air, and Captain De Foe answered:

"Ahoy the Blue Belt!"

"Are those boats from his majesty's brig-of-war Surf Bird?" came in the same clear, commanding tones.

"Ay, ay, they are, and we have come to take the Blue Belt."

"Give way, men!"

A cheer from the brig's crew answered the words of their commander.

But hardly had it died away when suddenly came in trumpet tones:

"Hold!"

Again the oars were poised, and then was heard:

"Back with those boats, for I hold a hostage on board whom I will kill if you attack me!"

"Who is the hostage?" called out Captain De Foe, impressed, in spite of himself, by the words and tone of the one who spoke from the schooner's deck.

All breathlessly awaited the answer, and the words came distinctly from the pirate's lips:

"I hold as hostage his Excellency Sir Henry Malcolm, Governor of the Carolinas, and if you attack me his life shall be the forfeit!"

"It is false, for I had a letter from him not an hour ago," cried Captain De Foe.

"He is here to answer for himself."

"This is some trick to keep me off."

"Let fall, men!"

"Hold, De Foe, he speaks the truth, for I am the pirate's prisoner," was heard in a different voice.

Again were the boats checked, and Captain De Foe asked:

"Is that you indeed, Sir Henry Malcolm?"

"Yes, sir, for I was kidnapped in my room just after sending my letter to you."

"In Heaven's name, what am I to do?" cried the British captain.

"Return to your brig, and if you want the Blue Belt follow me to sea when I sail and take her," was the defiant reply.

"Will he dare keep his word if I attack now, your excellency?" asked the Englishman.

"Try me, and see if the king does not have to send out another Governor," was the response.

"I am under your orders, your excellency," called out the British officer.

"You hear his threat, De Foe, and he will keep it, for even now the noose is about my neck."

"Then I shall withdraw to the brig and await further developments," said the disappointed officer.

"Do so for the present, at least," said the Governor.

With a muttered oath the English captain gave the order to return to the Surf Bird, and as they put about the schooner began to be covered with canvas, while tramping feet were heard running around the windlass in getting up the anchor, both certain indications that the pirate intended going to sea, and a fact that looked rather gloomy for the distinguished hostage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

KIDNAPPED.

The self-congratulations of Governor Malcolm that he had laid a trap in which to catch his pirate cousin was of rather short duration.

After the departure of Kendrick on his message to Captain De Foe the Governor continued pacing the room, his head downcast, his hands clasped behind his back.

He walked from the door to the open window, through which Robert Tichborne had made his ingress and egress, and was just about to turn on his heel, in one of his trips, when suddenly two musket barrels were shoved almost into his face, while he heard the stern and threatening words:

"One movement, or one word and you die!"

The situation was too perilous for him to disobey, and while his face blanched he tried to pierce the darkness beyond and through the open window.

But as he did so, a form appeared before his eyes, which he already knew but too well.

It was Captain Tichborne, and his face wore a grim smile, as he stepped into the room and said:

"My dear Governor, you will pardon me if I feel it my duty to borrow your august person for a short while."

"What do you mean, sirrah?" cried the Governor in a rage.

"Softly my dear Governor, for I wish my visit to be a peaceable one."

"But I mean, that as you have dispatched a messenger to the British brig that ran in to-night, to run down and sink me at my anchorage, I intend to make a hostage of you until I can get out of port, which it will be impossible for me to do before to-morrow night, as I wish to get a few spars, some stores, and repair some slight damages that can only be done here."

"What! you dare to say that you intend to hold me as a hostage?"

"That is just what I did say, Governor Malcolm."

"And my life is to be threatened if any vessel in port attacks you?"

"Your life is to be taken, dear Governor, not threatened, if I am attacked."

"Come! here are your cleak and hat, and while you are making your exit by way of the window, I will drop your sweet daughter a line to quell her fears regarding you, should she feel alarmed about your fate."

As Robert Tichborne spoke, he motioned the Governor to the window, where two seamen stood, covering him with their muskets, and then he sat down to the desk and picking up a quill pen wrote:

"Let the Lady Coraline Malcolm feel no anxiety regarding the fate of her father, as he goes on board the schooner that rescued him yesterday from death, to remain as a hostage until my vessel can put to sea, for I will be frank enough to tell her that I fly the black flag, and to protect myself and crew I have seized the honored Governor of the Carolinas."

"With deep respect,

"BLACK BEARD, THE BUCCANEER."

This note was left in a conspicuous spot on the desk and then the pirate turned to the Governor with:

"Come, my dear Sir Henry, not out yet?"

"The exit for you is undignified I know, yet it must be made, so go of your own accord, as I do not care to have my men carry you."

The Governor saw that there was no help for it, so at once leaped through the window, and was followed by the pirate, who led the way through the evergreens toward the shore.

Arriving at the landing, a boat was found in waiting, and five minutes after Sir Henry Malcolm found himself a prisoner in the cabin of the schooner, which was at once warped nearer inshore, and to the position in which the brig found it impossible to fire upon her without sending her iron hail rattling into the mansion or the town.

The coming of the brig was seen by Robert Tichborne, and finding that Captain De Foe intended attacking in his boats, he had the Governor brought on deck, and hailed, with a result already known to the reader.

As soon as the boats returned on board the Surf Bird, the pirate captain ordered his anchor up and sail set, and the schooner glided out from under the land and headed almost directly for the brig.

At first it was supposed that she was coming to lay aboard the Surf Bird, taking advantage of the Governor being on her deck, knowing the British sailors dare not fire upon her.

But changing her course slightly, she crossed the bows of the brig, unheeding the hail of Captain De Foe, and, instead of putting her helm apart and heading for the open sea, very quietly laid her course up the harbor.

Seeing this, the brig got under way and followed in her wake.

Arriving at a good anchorage off the town, the Blue Belt swept up into the wind and dropped anchor as though to remain some time, and the brig followed suit, only a couple of cable-lengths away.

And thus the rising sun fell upon them and revealed the startling fact that at the peak of the beautiful schooner floated the hideous flag of the buccaneer, with its sable field and white death's head and cross-bones.

CHAPTER XIX.

HELD AT BAY.

THE then town of Charleston was all excitement when the morning broke and showed what strange things had happened in its midst under the cover of darkness.

The schooner lay off across the harbor, opposite the busy town, and rested as quietly at anchor as though she was hidden in some inlet on the coast, the secret retreat of the buccaneers.

There was a fair breeze blowing, and the black flag of the pirate was flaunting boldly in the faces of the several vessels-of-war in the harbor and the numerous other crafts that were anchored here and there.

Captain De Foe had dropped anchor within easy range of the Blue Belt, and lay with his guns run out and men at quarters, ready to act at an instant's notice.

He had taken the precaution of sending word to the other cruisers in port of the existing state of affairs, so that they, too, were completely cowed by the pirate, when they knew that their much-respected Governor was a hostage on board.

The story flew through the town, and a stream of sympathizing persons went toward the mansion of Sir Henry to condole with poor Coraline.

But she had found the letter left her by Black Beard the Buccaneer, as he had signed himself, and shutting herself within an upper room that commanded a full view of the harbor, refused to see any one.

Thus was the strange spectacle presented of a little armed schooner, with not men enough to man her guns, bullying four or five vessels-of-war, one of them, the Surf Bird, her superior in guns and crew, and showing utter defiance to them.

To speak mildly even, the town and harbor were in an uproar, and all longed for the coming of the stern commodore, Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, for surely he, the fleet commander, with his half-dozen large vessels would cow the daring freebooter.

On board the schooner all was quiet.

A few men lounged listlessly here and there, gazing at the town and shipping with an air of perfect serenity.

Upon the quarter-deck, sat in an easy-chair the Governor, in plain view of the populace, and leaning negligently over the taffrail at times, or pacing to and fro, was the tall commanding form of the daring man who held the town and the cruisers at bay.

Those who watched him, saw that he was smoking, and occasionally uttered some remark to the Governor as he passed near him, while now and then he would raise a glass he carried to his eye, and turn it upon the town with seeming interest, though not once did he appear to notice the Surf Bird and other cruizers.

He was dressed in a deep black uniform, somber but handsome, with its neat trimmings of silver lace, and upon his broad shoulders, instead of epaulets, was embroidered in silver thread, a skull and cross-bones, the emblem of piracy.

His long black beard hung to his belt, and his curling hair fell upon his shoulders, making up altogether a magnificent specimen of manhood.

His sword, a cut and thrust blade, was jeweled-hilted, and had a silver scabbard, his two pistols stuck in a white silk sash, being mouned with the same precious metal richly carved.

The few men of the crew visible, were also dressed in black suits, with the "skull and cross-bones" embroidered in white silks upon the breasts of their sailor shirts, and wearing skull-caps with a like device upon the front.

An officer, the man addressed by his chief as Talbot, the reader will remember, wore a uniform like his chief's, excepting that the decoration was of white silk thread instead of silver.

Suddenly turning in his walk, the pirate leader was seen to give an order, and instantly a boat was lowered into the water, and the officer, Talbot, and four oarsmen sprung into it, and pulled shoreward.

Instantly the town was upon the tip-toe of excitement.

What could it mean?

The boat carried a white flag in the bow, but the black flag fluttered in the stern.

Straight to one of the piers it went, and a vast crowd assembled there to meet it.

Landing, Talbot sprung ashore, and raising his cap politely said:

"Will some one kindly direct me to a ship-chandler's?"

What!

Did the pirate boldly send ashore to buy stores for his vessel?

This was too much, and a city guard stepped forward, and amid the breathless silence of the crowd, asked:

"Do you dare come ashore, sir, to make purchases for your demon ship, with that flag flying at the stern of your boat?" and the officer pointed to the sable ensign.

"There flies its opposite in hue, sir, in the bow, and I bring an order from your Governor-Commandant, Sir Henry Malcolm, that I shall be protected and allowed to make what purchases I desire," very coolly returned Talbot.

The guard lieutenant took the paper handed to him and read it.

"Yes, the Governor gives you this protection paper; but I have half a mind to seize you and hold you as a hostage," he said.

The remark seemed to meet the sanction of the crowd for an assenting murmur arose.

But, not the least disturbed, Talbot calmly answered:

"Captain Black Beard, sir, would hang your Governor before your eyes did you do so, and, as for myself and crew here, we will willingly sacrifice our lives for our chief."

This was a view that no one had expected the pirate officer to take, and it nonplused the guard and those who heard it.

"I suppose I will be protected?" said Talbot, with a smile.

"Yes, the Governor must be obeyed, and his life not be jeopardized," was the answer of the officer of the guard, and turning, he pointed to a ship-chandler's near by.

Ordering his men to pull off a few lengths and wait his coming, Talbot boldly passed through the crowd, unmindful of the jeering and threats, and reached the store, where he made the purchases desired, the ship-chandler pretending that he cared not to make the sale, but did so to protect their loved Governor.

With the same spirit ready hands were found to bear the purchases, of spurs, canvas and stores to the landing, and the gold of the pirate officer was generously paid out for their services.

Loading the boat he sent it out to the schooner, while he stood guard on the rest, and all the while hooted, jeered and threatened by the crowd.

Thus, trip by trip the purchases were sent on board the schooner, until the last boat-load had departed.

As he gave the order to give way, he raised his hat politely to the crowd, as though he had been treated with the utmost courtesy, and with the sudden revulsion of feeling often undergone by masses of people, they suddenly broke forth in a rousing cheer for the daring and nerve of the man who had thus confronted them, and whose chief then held the whole town at bay.

But hardly had the boat gotten half-way to the schooner with its last load when a wild shout arose, and all eyes were turned down the harbor.

"The fleet! the fleet!"

Such was the cry.

"Lord St. Ledger'll hang him—Governor or no Governor!"

"Hurrah! hurrah!"

"Now, Sir Phaul, we'll see you hang!"

Such were the cries that rang through the crowd, and they were answered by booming the fleet of Commodore Lord Trenholm St. Ledger coming bravely up the harbor.

CHAPTER XX.

BOARDING THE ENEMY.

FROM her window in the mansion Coraline Malcolm saw the boat leave the schooner, and then its frequent trips to and fro.

She could see her father, with the aid of her powerful glass, seated upon the deck of the Blue Belt, and the tall form of the pirate chief also, and she could not but admire the daring man who stood alone in the hair of the lion, keeping his foes at bay, while he coolly got on board the necessary stores for his vessel.

Turning her glass down the harbor she started suddenly.

There, only a few leagues away, was the stately vessel-of-war she knew to be the flagship of the British squadron in those waters.

Astern of her were other vessels, too, making five in all, and under a full pressure of canvas they were heading up for the town.

"Lord St. Ledger is returning," she murmured.

Then she said, as though a sudden thought flashed upon her:

"And he will attack the schooner, under the plea of duty, if the king were on board, I verily believe.

"That man will keep his word, too. I know, and my father's life will be the forfeit; while, as he will never surrender his vessel, Reginald Rossmore too will be sacrificed.

"This must not be, for though Lord Trenholm St. Ledger might act under some circumstances with cruelty, he will not dare do so under others.

"At least we will see, and I have no time to lose."

Rising quickly she descended to her own room, and soon attired herself for out-doors.

Going down to the boat-house she called to Carter, the sailing-master of the unfortunate yacht, and ordered him to bring her own boat to the water stairs.

He obeyed her with evident surprise, for where could the Lady Coraline be going under the circumstances, he wondered.

"Shall I not accompany you my lady?" he asked politely.

"No, thank you, Carter, I will go alone."

"But allow me to send an carsman, my lady," he persisted.

Coraline shook her head, stepped into the boat, and seizing the light oars sent the boat flying up the harbor.

Rowing was a favorite amusement with her, and many an afternoon she had spent in her boat cruising about the harbor.

She handled the oars most skillfully, and laying her course when she started held to it. That course was directly toward the pirate schooner.

Her approach was observed from on board, and recognizing her, the Governor was seen to rise and quickly approach the gangway, accompanied by the buccaner.

The crowd on shore saw her too, and wondered.

Those on the vessels in the harbor also beheld her, and many an honest far waved to her to go back.

Her course led her close under the stern of the Surf Bird, and Captain De Foe and his officers stood on the quarter-deck.

"The girl is doubtless some sweetheart of the pirate, and boldly goes to join him," said a young officer.

"No; see that flag in the stern of her boat," cried another.

"It is the Governor's flag," said Captain De Foe, quickly, and a moment after he added:

"And it can be no other than the Governor's daughter, the Lady Coraline, whose beauty is so extolled in England.

"I will hail her."

Raising his voice he called out:

"Skiff ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" came back in the musical tones of the maiden.

"Put about, lady, for yonder lies a foe in your course," called out the British officer.

"It is to yonder foe that I am going, sir," was the bold reply.

"But, lady, I warn you that he is a pirate, and now holds the Governor, Sir Henry, as a hostage, which accounts for his boldness."

"I am aware of that, sir, for I am Lady Coraline Malcolm," and the maiden pulled on directly past the brig.

"Let me beg, Lady Coraline, that you do not place yourself in his power also," cried Captain De Foe, anxiously.

"I thank you, sir, for your anxiety upon my behalf, but I have decided upon what course I shall pursue, and shall carry it out," was the response, in a tone, too, that meant that there should be no more conversation upon the subject.

Then straight to the schooner went the little skiff, and going along side the gangway, Lady Coraline stepped on board, and asked the boat's crew to help her upon the deck with a polite:

"Permit me, Lady Malcolm, to aid you."

"My child! my poor girl! what have you done?" cried Sir Henry, as he met the maiden at the gangway.

"I have come to join you, father, and accept your fate, whatever that may be," was the bold reply, and as the brave girl spoke she glanced around her in hopes of catching sight of another form, whose destiny through life she would be most willing to share.

But that other was not on deck.

"Be seated, Lady Malcolm, and tell me how I can serve you, that I am honored with this visit," said Robert Tichborne, in his courteous way and he motioned her to a chair he had had placed near the one her father occupied.

"My object in coming, sir, was to serve my father, sir, for I observe down the harbor the fleet of Lord St. Ledger, and he is a man to attack the schooner at any risk, when a man's life is concerned; but with a lady exposed to danger, I feel that even he will not dare attempt to fire upon, or board you."

"You are brave, lady, to run the risk, for Lord St. Ledger is said to be a man without mercy."

"Should he attack me, he will find that I shall keep my threat and hang your father, and before he shall tread this deck, even with you on board, I will blow my schooner to atoms."

There was a smile upon the dark, handsome face of the man as he spoke, but Lady Coraline well knew that he meant just what he said.

With a strange interest, knowing just who he was, and all that he had been, though he little dreamed that she knew it, she gazed upon him and, in her heart she pitied him, while she could not but admire his nerve and courage.

She saw before her a man with a history that had its dark pages, and yet about him there was a certain grandeur that she well knew, had his nature not been warped by cruel wrongs done him, would have made him one of the noblest of men; but tortured into crime, as he had been, he was capable of becoming a demon, a human tiger to prey upon his fellow-beings.

"Had you not better send a boat under a flag of truce to meet Lord St. Ledger, and tell him who are your hostages?" she asked a little anxiously.

"No, Lady Malcolm, for he will communicate with Captain De Foe before he attacks me, and know all."

"May I ask why you do not put to sea, sir, for you have the stores on board you wished?"

"True, and I so intended doing, until I saw the fleet coming up the harbor."

"My movements will now be governed by those of Commodore Lord Trenholm," was the pleasant reply, and there was not the slightest anxiety displayed in his face, or manner, as to what the result might be.

Coraline was silent a moment, and it was evident that she wished to say more, for she seemed to grow a trifle nervous as the fleet drew near.

At last she said:

"If I mistake not, Captain Black Beard, you have other prisoners on board, than my father and myself?"

"Yes, lady."

"Would it not be well to bring them on deck also, that Lord St. Ledger might see how great is the reason why he should not fire upon you?"

"If you so wish it, I will so order, Lady Malcolm," was the pleasant response, while seemingly reading her motive, the Governor said quickly:

"They being but a junior officer and his men, would have no weight with St. Ledger."

"If I understand aright, father, the junior officer is a favorite of his majesty, and any man's life must needs balance something in the scale, even with Lord St. Ledger," replied Coraline, coldly.

"It is decided against you, Governor Malcolm, and I must obey the command of your fair daughter," smilingly said Robert Tichborne with a look which nettled the Governor greatly.

Then turning to his officer the pirate continued:

"Talbot, bring on deck Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore and his men."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the officer disappeared below to execute the order.

CHAPTER XXI.

STRANGELY MET ONCE MORE.

SINCE his capture by Robert Tichborne, Reginald Rossmore had shared the fate of his junior officers and men.

They had all been put in irons, and were constantly guarded, for the chief seemed not to care to risk their freeing themselves and attempting to regain the schooner.

They had, however, otherwise, been well treated, given as comfortable quarters as possible under the circumstances, and fed from the cabin of Robert Tichborne.

In irons as he was, the young sailor, so rapidly ascending the ladder of fame, had an opportunity to brood over the misfortune that had overtaken him.

He felt that even the most prejudiced officer of the Royal Navy could not condemn his losing the schooner under the circumstances.

Robert Tichborne had come to him with just the number of men he was expecting to be sent on board, to complete the complement to carry the schooner to America.

Then too he had brought the sealed dispatches from the king, the official papers from the admiralty, and the mail bag that was to be taken to the Governor.

He had appeared a gentleman, and had proven himself a most competent officer, and was, withal a pleasant companion and seemingly good friend.

His men had never once been suspected as being other than a king's crew, and he had so ingeniously taken charge of the schooner that resistance would have been utter madness.

Expecting to return to America in honor, and with greater rank, it was a bitter blow to the young officer to go back without his vessel, with the report that he had to make.

Several times had Talbot come to him with a message from Captain Tichborne, offering him the freedom of the schooner, if he would give his parole not to attempt to seize the craft; but each time he had refused with the remark:

"Say to your commander I accept no favors from pirates, and prefer being in irons with my men, than free in his company."

The day before, after the storm, Reginald Rossmore had heard from the man who carried him his supper, of the rescue of the Governor-Commandant and his party from the sunk yacht, and also that Captain Tichborne had sprung into the sea and saved the life of Lady Coraline.

A pang of jealousy and envy shot through the heart of the young sailor that he was not the one to have rendered this great service to the woman he so truly loved, and that the honor fell upon a pirate.

Now he longed to see Lady Coraline the reader can well imagine, and when with the morning the same gossip servant told him all that had occurred, he would have given his life almost to have been free, that he might have ended the career of Robert Tichborne, be the consequences to him what they might.

As the hatches were open when the schooner lay at anchor before the town, Reginald Rossmore and his men knew something of what was going on, and how boldly the buccaneer chief was acting.

The arrival on board of Coraline he did not know, however, and he was surprised greatly when Talbot came to him and said:

"Lieutenant Rossmore, your presence, and that of your men, is required upon deck."

"By whom?"

"The chief."

"I can but obey."

"Are we to be freed from our irons?"

"I received no such orders, sir."

"It matters not, we can wear them."

"Come lads, the pirate captain orders, and he is master here."

All arose and followed their young leader.

The eyes of Lady Coraline were fixed upon the wardroom hatchway, and soon she saw the elegant form of her lover, not at all weighed down by his irons, step upon deck.

He was pale, yet wore a proud, defiant look, and his eyes flashed fire as they fell upon Robert Tichborne.

Behind him came his junior officers, and then the score of seamen who had been, with their commander, so cleverly deceived by the bold game of the pirate.

Lady Coraline trembled as she caught sight of her lover, and her face crimsoned; but almost instantly she regained her composure, and her face resumed its paleness.

She watched him closely, saw his sweeping glance over the schooner, his look then out over the waters, at the vessels and the town, and then down the harbor his gaze turned upon the coming fleet.

As he came slowly aft, for he was heavily ironed, she saw his eyes again turn upon the brig of-war, Surf Bird, with a strange look, for he must have remembered that he left her at anchor in the Thames when he set sail from London.

Then he bent his gaze upon what was before him, saw her father, the pirate captain, and herself.

She noted him start, hesitate, stop, then come forward with a face that had suddenly grown livid.

"Lieutenant Rossmore, I am glad to welcome you on deck, sir."

"The Governor, Sir Henry Malcolm, and the Lady Coraline. I believe you have met before," said Robert Tichborne, with the utmost courtesy, and placing a chair for the young lieutenant, he added:

"Be seated, sir!"

Reginald Rossmore sunk into the chair as though he really needed support at the instant, while his crew halted in a line across

the deck, the two junior officers standing a little aloof.

"I have had the honor of meeting Mr. Rossmore before, and regret that he allowed himself to be deprived of the vessel the king intrusted to his care," said the Governor, sternly, while, as though to atone for this severity, which she saw cut deep into her lover's heart, Lady Coraline said quickly:

"Yes, both my father and myself owe to Lieutenant Rossmore very many courtesies."

"I am glad to meet you again, sir, but regret that misfortune has befallen you, though I am sure it is from no fault of yours."

Before Reginald could reply Robert Tichborne said bluntly:

"I'll swear to that!—pardon me, Lady Coraline, but I am more than willing to rebuke your father's very unkind and uncalled-for words, by testifying in behalf of Lieutenant Rossmore."

"He was cruelly deceived by one he deemed a king's officer, and I seized his vessel."

"Now I have your father in my power, the representative here of his majesty, and surrounded by his cruisers, and in view of thousands of his subjects."

"You see, my dear Governor, that you are more to be censured by your king, than is this gallant young officer."

In spite of the rebuke to her father, Coraline smiled slightly, while the Governor felt it deeply.

As for Reginald Rossmore he said sternly:

"Treachery, Sir Pirate, and not valor has doubtless placed his excellency Sir Henry Malcolm in your power, as it did me, and, though you are playing a bold game now, the day I hope will come when you and I meet upon equal terms."

"I hope so sincerely, Lieutenant Rossmore, if so you wish it."

"But now, you and Governor Malcolm are my hostages, with your men, against yonder hot-brained fool St. Ledger's actions; but, as for the Lady Coraline she is a voluntary hostage, and as such is free to depart at will."

"No, I prefer to remain," said the maiden firmly.

"It is presumption in me to suggest, or offer advice to you, Lady Coraline; but I think it were better did you retire and allow Lord St. Ledger to use his will, without reference to those whom this buccaneer holds as hostages."

"For, if he were strung up to the yard-arm, it would be a fitting recompense to his majesty the king for our lives."

Sir Henry at these words, wheeled angrily upon Reginald Rossmore and said:

"Pardon me, young man; but I am vain enough to believe that the king thinks more of myself than he does for the hanging of a miserable sea cutthroat."

"I spoke from a patriotic view, Sir Henry, and not from a personal one," returned Reginald Rossmore, quietly, and Lady Coraline, anxious to prevent any retort from her father said quickly:

"Well, the end must soon come, whatever it be, for see, the fleet is not a mile away, and Lord St. Ledger is signaling Captain De Foe."

"Yes, and there sounds the drum on my lord's vessel, beating to quarters," coolly said Robert Tichborne, as he turned his glass upon the vessels of-war, now within easy range of his schooner.

CHAPTER XXII.

CLIPPING THE LION'S CLAWS.

AS Lord Trenholm St. Ledger swept up the harbor upon his fleet flag-ship *Superb*, he was in no very enviable frame of mind, for his cruise to the Indies, in hopes of meeting and annihilating the French squadron, was a failure.

He had hoped to win a great sea victory before his marriage with the beautiful Lady Coraline, and would then be content to resign from the service and settle down on his lordly estate in England to live on his laurels won.

He had hardly passed the lower forts before he saw that something was wrong in the upper harbor.

It was not a holiday, yet there were vast crowds seen upon the shore and piers in front of the city.

Then he saw that not a vessel was moving about the harbor, not a craft under sail, and even no small boat visible under oars.

Next he discovered that the flags in the town were flying at half-mast, and that the shipping also displayed their colors.

What could it mean?

What dire calamity had befallen the people?

Had news come since his departure that the king was dead?

Had the Governor died during his absence?

Or, worse than all, perhaps the Lady Coraline was dead.

These thoughts flashed like lightning through his brain, and he swept the harbor, the town and last the Governor's mansion, with his glass.

There too the flag floated at half mast.

Yet why the dense crowd upon the shore overlooking the harbor?

Suddenly an exclamation from an officer attracted his attention.

"What is it, Hastings?" he asked.

"If you will turn your glass upon the cruisers, my lord, you will see that their flags are not half-masted."

"By the king's crown! you are right."

"What can it mean?" cried the commodore.

And up the harbor the fleet of fine vessels swept, all grouped together, but the flag-ship leading, and upon all were the eyes of their crews turned upon the town, and the vessels lying so quietly before it.

Nearer and nearer they drew, until Lord Trenholm cried out:

"There is his majesty's brig, Surf Bird, as I live."

"Signal De Foe, Hastings, and ask what in Satan's name is to pay, with the harbor wearing this Sabbath-day air, and the town seemingly so excited."

"Ay, ay, my lord," answered the officer, and instantly he sent up a signal that read:

"Anything wrong?"

All watched the answer from the brig, which was known to many on the decks of the *Superb*, as the king's crack cruiser among the lesser craft, and there was the wonder excited as to why she was there.

Quickly the response came from the Surf Bird:

"A pirate in port!"

"What! and half a dozen cruisers lying at anchor!"

"Signal again, Hastings, for him to blow him out of the water, for we do not care to trouble ourselves with such small game as a pirate."

"Blow him out of the water!"

So read the next signal, and again came an answer:

"Dare not do it!"

"Are they mad?"

"Tell Captain De Foe that I command it!" firmly said Lord St. Ledger.

Up went the signal:

"You are commanded by Commodore Lord St. Ledger to attack at once!"

Back then came the answer:

"The Governor, Sir Henry Malcolm, is held as a hostage by the pirate!"

A look of amazement fell upon all, and the eyes of the officers turned upon their chief.

Tersely came his command:

"Tell him to carry the pirate by boarding, if Satan is a stage on board!"

The signal was given, and Lord St. Ledger asked quickly, as he saw an answer:

"What does he say?"

The answer read:

"Captain De Foe will await an interview with Lord St. Ledger before obeying orders!"

"By Heaven! but there is more in this than is visible upon the surface."

"Hal! there lies the pirate, now, and my year's pay if it is not his majesty's yacht *Blue Belt* with the black flag flying over his deck," cried Lord St. Ledger.

This recognition of the schooner was confirmed by a number on board the *Superb*, and then the British commodore said:

"Hastings, signal De Foe to come on board as soon as I drop anchor, and call the crew to quarters!"

Both orders were obeyed, and soon after the *Superb* luffed up and let fall her anchor with her men at quarters, just as Captain De Foe ran alongside in his boat.

"Well, De Foe, I am glad to see you, for I did not expect the pleasure of seeing you in America."

"But what, in the king's name is the trouble?" and Lord Trenholm grasped the hand of his junior officer, whom he had known well in England.

Bowing to the officers who greeted him, and shaking hands warmly with the British Commodore, Frank De Foe told his story in a few words to his amazed listeners, from the capture of the *Blue Belt* by Black Beard to his seizure of the Governor and the going on board voluntarily of Lady Coraline Malcolm.

"Now, my lord, what is to be done?" asked the captain.

"If Lady Coraline was not on board I'd take the chances with the Governor."

"Yes, my lord, but she is on board, and so is young Rossmore and his men."

"Young who?"

"Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore."

Lord Trenholm St. Ledger started at the name, and bitted forth:

"In the name of the saints, what is he doing there?"

"He is the young officer whom the king placed in command of the *Blue Belt*, having promoted him for gallant service he rendered in crossing the ocean in the packet-ship."

"Ah!" and Lord Trenholm ground his teeth with rage to think that the one he had sent to England to get rid of, had been promoted and sent back by the king.

Mentally he said:

"I wish the pirate would hang him."

"Egad! I'd let him go free if he would."

But aloud he remarked:

"Ah, yes, and a dashing young fellow, he is, and he adds another valuable hostage to those held by this daring pirate."

"Now let us see what can be done, De Foe."
"I confess my inability to advise, my lord," answered the captain.

Lord Trenholm was silent an instant and then said:

"I'll try threats."

Captain De Foe shook his head dubiously.

"I can but try it."

"Midshipman Manning!"

"My lord," and a young officer stepped forward.

"Call away the third cutter, and four men and board yonder schooner!"

"Ay, ay, my lord."

"Say to Black Beard the Pirate, that if he will surrender Governor Sir Henry Malcolm and Lady Coraline to me—"

"And Lieutenant Rossmore and his men, my lord," suggested Captain De Foe.

"Yes," and the nobleman paused.

"Yes, and the officers and men he holds prisoners, that I will give him three hours' start from this port."

"If he refuses, tell him that Lord Trenholm considers that he has done his duty, that he will carry the schooner by boarding with the cutlass, and, if he finds the slightest harm done to Sir Henry and Lady Coraline Malcolm, that he will burn him at a stake in the Market Place of the town, ay, he and every man of his crew."

"Ay, ay, my lord."

"You understand, Manning?"

"Perfectly, my lord."

"Then be off at once."

The midshipman saluted and departed, and soon after the cutter left the ship's side with the young officer in the stern sheets, his hand upon the tiller, guiding the boat directly to the schooner.

"Boat ahoy!" hailed Robert Tichborne, in tones that were distinctly heard upon the deck of every British cruiser in port, and by the crowd on shore.

"Ahoy the pirate," answered the midshipman.

"What boat is that?"

"A boat from the flagship Superb."

"Keep off!" was the stern command.

"I bear a message from Commodore Lord Trenholm St. Ledger," called out the midshipman.

"Give the compliments of Black Beard the Buccaneer to Commodore Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, of the Flag Ship Superb, and say to him that I will receive no communication from him," was the sneering and haughty response.

All this time the boat had been approaching nearer to the schooner, and now in a low tone the midshipman called to his men:

"Way 'nough!"

The oars were poised above the waters, and, as the boat still glided gently forward the midshipman arose to his feet and said in a loud voice:

"Sir Pirate, I am ordered by Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, commander of his majesty's sea forces on this coast, to offer you safe passage to sea, with three hours' start of any cruisers, if you will surrender the honorable hostages you hold."

"And if I refuse?" asked the pirate, as the midshipman paused.

"Then, Sir Black Beard, I am ordered by my chief to inform you that he will carry your schooner with the cutlass, and if one of the captives you have in your power is harmed, he will burn you and every man of your crew at stakes in the market-place of the town."

The midshipman spoke in a tone that reached nearly every ear, and a wild cheer broke forth from the crowd on shore at this bold step of Lord Trenholm.

Then Robert Tichborne sprang boldly upon the port bulwark, where all could see him, and his words rung like a trumpet as he said:

"Back to your commodore, sir officer, and tell him that I, Black Beard the Pirate, stand out to sea at once and defy him; for by the Christian cross, if he trains a gun upon me, I will blow my schooner, captives and all to atoms!"

"You have my answer—go!"

Not a sound followed this horrible threat, and the midshipman, knowing that further parley was useless, put his boat about and returned to his vessel.

But ere he reached it the crew of the schooner were busy getting up the anchor and setting sail, and careening gently to the breeze the beautiful vessel glided seaward through her foes, not one of whom dared to be the one to cause the terrible pirate to carry out his fearful threat.

Within a cable's length of the Superb she passed, and Sir Henry sadly waved his hand to the commodore, who raised his hat to Lady Coraline—a salute she barely acknowledged.

Grim and defiant Robert Tichborne stood, directing the course of his beautiful vessel, and as she shot by he had the temerity to dip his sable flag to the red ensign of Great Britain.

On swept the schooner down the harbor, and each cruiser as he passed, in obedience to a signal from the Superb, got under way and followed in her wake, until the daring little vessel

had half a score of enemies upon her track, apparently determined to follow her to the bitter end, though they dared not fire upon her.

The forts, seeing a vessel leading the fleet and with the black flag at her peak, would have opened upon her; but the Superb signaled to let her pass in peace, and on she glided out into deep water, spreading clouds of canvas to the freshening breeze as she held on her course, and rapidly dropping her pursuers astern, excepting the Surf Bird and Superb which, crowded from deck to truck with sail, managed to hold their own with the swift little craft whose daring commander had so fearlessly clipped the lion's claws.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RETURN.

WHEN the midshipman delivered his message from Lord Trenholm, the Governor, Coraline and all on board listened with the deepest attention to see what it would be.

The pirate captain alone seemed to be indifferent as to its tenor.

Sir Henry was fearful in his heart that Lord Trenholm would do some rash thing, and not knowing that he did not intend to carry out his threat, he turned earnestly to Robert Tichborne to note the effect of the words upon him.

He had seen enough of his cousin to appreciate that he was not to be frightened, and he feared that the threat of Lord Trenholm might drive him to extremes.

When the answer came Sir Henry turned pale with dread, and eagerly said to Lady Coraline:

"My child, in some way this man must be bought off, for Lord Trenholm will surely keep his threat, and it may drive the pirate to keep his word."

"He will not have to blow up his schooner, father," was the calm reply of the maiden.

"And why not?" asked her father, in surprise.

"Because Lord Trenholm threatened merely to frighten Captain Black Beard, and will never dare carry out the threat when he sees that he failed in his intention."

"See, we are running right through the midst of the cruisers, and not one of them dare offer resistance."

"God grant it," fervently said the Governor, and, as the Blue Belt glided by vessel after vessel, and no hostile attempt was made upon her, he began to breathe freer.

What Robert Tichborne intended doing with himself and his daughter, Sir Henry did not know, and his conscience-stricken heart made him fear the worst, and most wistfully did he look back at the land as the fleet schooner dropped it astern.

"Ask him his intentions regarding us, Coraline," urged the Governor.

Instantly she said:

"Captain Blackbeard, my father desires to know your intentions regarding your hostages, now that you have gained blue water."

"Lady Coraline will pardon me if I decline answering her question," was the courteous reply; and noting that the schooner was beginning to creep away from the Superb, yet was still held by the Surf Bird, Robert Tichborne ordered more sail to be set.

Its effect was evident a moment after it was spread, for the schooner began to drop the brig also, and that the latter had every stitch of canvas aloft that would draw, all could see.

As it was now late in the afternoon, Black Beard invited his guests, perforce, to the cabin to dinner, including in the invitation Reginald Rossmore.

Both the latter and the Governor would have refused, for neither seemed to have any appetite, and more, did not care to sit at a pirate's table; but Lady Coraline instantly accepted, and taking her father's arm led the way, with the remark:

"I hope that Lieutenant Rossmore will join us, too."

Thus urged, Reginald could not refuse, and the four were soon seated at the table, the pirate host doing the honors in a manner that showed he had been born a gentleman, whatever crime might have made him in after years.

The dinner was a most sumptuous one, the wine rare and old, and in spite of their danger the guests enjoyed the meal, the pirate entertaining them with anecdotes and flashes of his wit, for he seemed anxious to appear well in the eyes of his cousin, little knowing that she knew the secret he wished kept from her.

At last the repast was over, and they ascended to the deck to find that darkness had settled upon the sea.

The wind had increased, and was blowing at a nine-knot rate, and the schooner was bowling along at a rapid pace through the rising sea.

The skies were overcast with clouds, and the darkness was deepening; but half a league astern the lights of the Surf Bird could be seen, and in her wake were those of the Superb, with others further off.

After holding on awhile longer, Black Beard called to his lieutenant, and said:

"Rig a buoy with a lantern upon it, Talbot!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the officer, and soon he had it in readiness, a long and narrow raft of boards, with a spar stuck through the center, and weighted beneath to hold it steady, and to the top of which a lantern was swung.

"Out with the schooner's lights!" came the order.

Instantly it was obeyed.

"Now launch the raft!"

That was done also, and the raft was left floating astern, its lantern rising and falling upon the waves, and appearing like the lights of a vessel only a short distance off.

Instantly the lighter sails were taken in on the schooner, and her course was changed from east to due south.

After running on that course for half a league she was put away southwest, and from her decks could be distinctly seen the lights of the fleet standing swiftly on seaward.

"I guess the Surf Bird has reached the raft by this time and found out we have dodged her," said Black Beard to Talbot, and his words were heard by his prisoners.

"And which course now, sir?" asked the officer.

"Back to the harbor."

"Of Charleston?" and the question was asked with seeming surprise.

"Yes."

The officer made no reply to his chief, but put the schooner on her course back to port, to the surprise of his prisoner-guests.

Pressing on under all the sail she could carry, in the increasing wind, she made a rapid run back into the harbor entrance, Black Beard himself signaling the forts with lights that it was the *Scorpion*, a schooner that had been one of his pursuers out to sea.

Without a word to the Governor or the others, the stern pirate stood at his post, and as the lights of the town hove in sight, said simply to Talbot, who was at the wheel:

"Keep her away for our last night's anchorage, off the Governor's mansion."

"By the Lord Harry! but he intends to rob the mansion, now that he knows all the cruisers are leagues at sea hunting for him," said the Governor to his daughter, who answered coldly:

"On the contrary, sir, I think he intends returning us to our homes."

"No, you do not believe that!" eagerly cried the Governor.

"So it seems to me, father."

"And so I believe, Lady Coraline," said Reginald Rossmore, who had been released of his irons, and stood near.

As he spoke the Blue Belt luffed up sharp and lay to, while the stern voice of her commander ordered:

"Lower away the first cutter!"

Quickly it was done and the crew of the boat took their seats and seized their oars.

"Now, Governor Malcolm, it will give me pleasure to return yourself and daughter to your home, with regret that I have had to jeopardize your lives to protect my own," said Black Beard, advancing toward them.

"You are certainly most kind, sir, but may I ask if you do not intend to release Lieutenant Rossmore and his crew also?" said Coraline, and the darkness hid the blush that arose to her face in begging for her lover.

"Assuredly, Lady Coraline, for Lieutenant Rossmore has already suffered sufficiently at my hands in the loss of his vessel and his having been my prisoner."

"He is free to go with his brother officers and men, and some day we may meet again, when he will have opportunity to revenge himself upon me, if so he will."

"I thank you, Sir Pirate, and Heaven grant that we may meet again," said the young lieutenant.

Handing Lady Coraline into the boat, Black Beard motioned to the Governor and Reginald to follow, and then he stepped back upon the gangway and, raising his hat, said politely:

"Good-night, and good-by."

The coxswain then gave the order to his crew to let fall and give way, and the boat moved shoreward.

Soon after it returned, and the two officers and men left behind were freed of their irons and sent on shore.

Standing where they had landed, all watched the dimly visible schooner, as the boat rowed back to her, heard the stern voice of the pirate chief give his orders to crowd the craft with canvas, and then saw the fleet vessel fly away like a huge white cloud, her prow turned toward the open sea.

But hardly had she sailed a score of lengths, when there suddenly loomed in sight a vessel coming into port.

Hails and answers followed, then the creaking of blocks, loud commands, a boatswain's shrill whistle, a drum beating "to quarters," and then came one ringing cry:

"Starboard battery, fire!"

Red flashes followed, the thunder of guns went echoing up the harbor, and the Blue Belt had grappled with a foe in deadly combat.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FLIGHT OF THE BLUE BELT.

THE vessel, which the Blue Belt had so suddenly come upon in the darkness was the slowest one of the cruisers that had gone in chase of her.

Seeing that the pirate would drop her out of sight before morning, her commander had wisely put about, and did so just as the Blue Belt was tacking back to port.

The darkness prevented those on board the cruiser from seeing the schooner, and Robert Tichborne had his eye upon the lights of the stranger as soon as he had started upon his return to sea.

Ordering his men quietly to the port guns, he had them double-shotted with ball and grape, and then, taking the helm himself, told Talbot to place muskets along the broadside for men to fire a volley upon the enemy as soon as the heavy pieces were discharged.

Straight on his course he held, and he was almost upon the cruiser before he was discovered.

Then there followed loud orders, a crashing of timbers as the schooner shot across the other's bows, carrying her bowsprit away, for the stranger had suddenly luffed up sharp, to avoid a collision.

Above the din arose the commanding tones of Black Beard, telling his men to fire, and the shock not only staggered the craft but laid many a brave man dead or dying upon her decks.

And away shot the Blue Belt, leaving death and ruin behind her, and gliding out of sight in the darkness like a phantom.

But the vessel she had hit so hard was double the schooner's size, had a large crew and a broadside of ten guns, and it did not take her long to rally from the shock.

Search was instantly made for the daring schooner, and dimly seen in the distance, the guns of the cruiser opened upon her hot and heavy.

Fortunately for the Blue Belt, the wind was blowing hard, the harbor was rough, and the darkness great, and no aim could be taken, so the shots flew wild.

But the pirate had been recognized, and knowing his inability to overhaul him, the captain of the cruiser at once sent up blue lights and kept up his fire to alarm the forts and any other vessel that might be coming into the harbor.

Grim and silent the schooner sped on, not showing a light or replying to the fire sent after her, for her bold commander knew that he had a desperate gantlet to run.

With but thirty men to man his guns, he knew well his weakness, and that skill and daring alone would carry him through.

The lights of the forts were now near him, and far down the harbor he beheld other lights, which he knew to be several more cruisers coming into port.

The vessel he had so severely handled, had alarmed the forts, and her blue lights and the firing had also been seen and heard upon the returning cruisers, so he could fully appreciate his terrible danger.

Once the thought seized upon him to return and retake the Governor and his party as hostages; but his manhood rebelled at the second time saving himself by such means.

Then he knew, too, that he would have the crippled cruiser to fight, to go back on that course, and with his diminished crew, he felt that it would be only second in peril to running the gantlet of what was before him.

So on he held, trusting in the darkness, the speed of his vessel, and his own nerve to save him.

For some time it was impossible for the officers of the forts to find the schooner in the darkness, for she had shot beyond the radius of light thrown by the blue lights.

But at last she was spied running along under a cloud of sail, dark silent and phantom-like.

Instantly blue lights were sent up from the forts, and then the heavy guns opened viciously.

Shot after shot was fired, and still without result.

Calling his men from their guns, Black Beard ordered them to the posts where he needed them to the better work the schooner, and taking the helm himself, he so quickly and frequently changed his course, that the fort often fired at where they expected him to be, rather than where he was.

By this means the daring pirate saved his craft many a hard blow, and grimly congratulated himself that not a single man had been hard hit on board thus far.

Running like a race-horse, the Blue Belt promised soon to shoot ahead of danger from the forts, when one shot struck fair, cutting through both bulwarks, dismounting a gun and laying three men dead on her decks.

"I can spare the guns better than the men, just now," said Black Beard, grimly, and still holding on, he the next moment found that he was out of all danger from the forts.

But now he knew that there was a severer tug of war before him, for three vessels were in his course, and they were heading so as to catch him between them, for, though they could not surmise who he was, yet they had been warned by the firing of the cruiser and the forts, that some vessel was making a daring attempt to escape from the harbor.

The firing from the forts, by the flashes, had revealed the schooner pressing on under full sail for the offing, and in the center of the channel.

But, little dreaming that they were aiding the pirate, the forts, flooding the daring craft out of range, had ceased firing.

Black Beard had no pilot for the harbor, but he had run out before, and been in and out several times, and he was a man to remember bearings.

When Carter had piloted the Blue Belt in, Black Beard remembered that he had hugged one shore very close, where he had said there was water enough for the schooner, but not for vessels of deeper draught.

Knowing that after the bright flashes from the fort had ceased, it would be some minutes before the eyes of those on the cruisers would become sufficiently accustomed to the darkness to enable them to see the schooner, he instantly had headed away for the channel run by Carter, and before he was discovered had gained it.

In fact those on the cruisers were all looking dead ahead for the little craft, where they had last seen her by the flashes from the forts.

Not beholding her, it was believed that she had run under, or been struck hard and sunk.

But suddenly one keen eye, sweeping landward, spied the schooner almost abreast of the cruiser furthest in shore, and flying along like a witch for open water.

Instantly the cry of alarm was given, the cruiser wore round, so as to give her a broadside, and once more she became a target for iron hail.

Putting about with all speed the three vessels of war began what was now a stern chase, opening from their bow guns upon the daring vessel which had so nearly eluded them.

But hugging the shore as close as he dared, with two men, one on either bow, throwing the lead, Black Beard held on, the schooner crowded with every stitch of canvas that would draw.

On, on she flew, with hope ahead, despair astern.

On, under the fierce iron hail, hit now and then, and with one of her crew sinking down dead, or dying, at his post, yet still pressing forward.

Now a savage shot tore away the maintopmast; but the wreck was cleared by willing hands, and the foretopsail was taken in, which slightly diminished the speed of the fleet craft.

Silent, except when some order came from his stern lips, grim and determined, Black Beard stood at the wheel, guiding his vessel on her way, and not until a wild cheer broke from the remnant of his crew, telling that the Blue Belt had safely run the gantlet, for the shots of her pursuers were falling short, did he relinquish the helm to his lieutenant with the cool remark:

"We made it, Talbot, and now I will go forward and see what damage was done to the brave little craft, and my gallant lad."

CHAPTER XXV.

A VISITOR TO THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION.

THE morning broke bright and beautiful, after the night of thrilling adventure, and the good citizens of Charleston awoke to more excitement.

They had been aroused and startled by the tremendous firing from the forts and cruisers, and they did not learn the cause of it until the following morning the guard, relieved of night duty at the gubernatorial mansion, reported the return of the Governor.

Then too they saw in the harbor a crippled cruiser at anchor, and others were slowly coming up to an anchorage.

None of them had in tow the pirate schooner nor was that pretty craft visible upon the waste of waters, to those who were so anxiously looking for her.

Toward noon the fleet was all in excepting the Superb and the Surf Bird.

Those two vessels had sailed off in chase of the pirate, and it was to be hoped they would render a good account of themselves.

By degrees the whole story got afloat, of how the Blue Belt had doubled upon the fleet, run back under the cover of the darkness, signaled the forts that she was the schooner Scorpion, landing the Governor, his daughter and the sailor captives, had set sail once more, crippling a large brig-of-war, running the gantlet of a terrific fire, and flying out to deep water with the two fleetest crafts on the coast at her heels.

Numerous were the congratulations poured in upon the Governor by his admirers, and that would have been offered to Lady Coraline, had she not excused herself to all visitors.

Seeking the Oleander Inn with his two junior officers, Reginald Rossmore had sent his men to a sailors' tavern, and they, too, came in for warm congratulations upon all sides, and were looked upon as heroes for having lost their vessel to such a man as Black Beard, instead of being censured for it.

All day long the exciting scenes of the previous day and night kept the town in a state of chaos, and wistful eyes were turned constantly down the harbor to see if the Superb or Surf Bird were visible, returning with the daring pirate.

Every officer that could get leave from the forts came up to the town to talk it over, and those on the cruisers came ashore, and the Oleander became a scene of military excitement never known before.

The behavior of Black Beard toward the Governor and his prisoners, won for him great praise upon all sides, and there were many who were really glad that he had escaped from the harbor, and hoped that he would not be captured.

And thus night came on and found the town still excited and anxious, for the Superb and Surf Bird had not yet returned.

After an early tea the Governor rode up into the town and visited the Oleander, as was of ten his wont, and where a room was reserved for himself and other dignitaries who cared to come there for a glass of the landlord's good wine, or to indulge in a game of whist.

There was one person who saw him enter, avoided him, and going to his room threw his cloak about his shoulders.

Descending by a private stairs, he walked out into the street and wended his way to the shore, where, from a waterman, he secured a light rowing skiff.

"Shall I go with yer honor?" asked the waterman.

"No, my man, I will row myself," was the answer, and springing into the skiff he seized the oars like one who knew well their use.

Away shot the boat down the harbor, and the quick, strong strokes of the oarsman sent it along side of the pier in front of the Governor's mansion, within half an hour after leaving the town wharf.

Springing out, he made fast his boat and boldly walked up to the mansion.

A soldier was on duty, who saluted at seeing the uniform of an officer, and the servant within the hall was called.

It was Kendrick, who showed the effects of the excitement he had passed through, for, like Othello, he had believed his occupation gone, when the Governor was a prisoner on board the schooner.

"Kindly bear the name of Lieutenant Rossmore to the Lady Coraline, my man, with the hope that she will grant him an interview," said the young officer.

"The Lady Coraline, sir, forbids herself to all visitors," said Kendrick.

"Perhaps she may be good enough to make an exception in my case."

"No, sir, for I am forbid to carry her the name of any visitor, sir."

"Then you make an exception in my case," and a heavy piece of gold was dropped into the ready palm of Kendrick.

"I will carry your name to her, sir, but the master will be angry that I disturb her."

"You may leave it to the Lady Coraline to inform him that you did so."

"Yes, sir, so I can," was the reply of Kendrick, and showing the young officer into the

reception room of Lady Coraline, he departed upon his errand.

He was gone but a short while and returned with the message:

"The Lady Coraline will see you, sir."

Kendrick came close enough to Reginald Rossmore to deliver this message, to be in reach of his hand, and he was a good enough reader of human nature to understand that he would be rewarded a second time for the news he brought.

Nor was he mistaken, for he received another golden souvenir, a smile and thanks for his services, departing happy, and leaving the visitor in an unhappy state of mind, for he knew not what his reception might be, as Lady Coraline had been strangely cold to him on board the pirate schooner.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DISCARDED.

WITH a beating heart did Reginald Rossmore await the coming of Lady Coraline.

His love had gone forth to her in all its intensity, and, reared as he had been by an unsympathizing parent, he had had no one upon whom to bestow his affection.

Few friendships had he formed, and meeting Coraline, she became the Mecca of his hopes.

She had confessed to him her love, and then the shadow came in the refusal of Governor Malcolm to receive the young officer longer as a guest at the mansion.

This mandate both had obeyed, the lover by keeping away, and the maiden by not seeing him there.

But often had the two met upon the water, when it was supposed that the Lady Coraline was wrapp'd in dreamland, and each to the other had their hearts gone forth.

The sudden departure of the young officer to England, sent out of the way by both the Governor and Lord Trenholm, with innuendoes thrown in by both, led Lady Coraline to believe that she was deserted, and she had bitterly mourned her having loved unworthily, as she believed, and became the affianced of the nobleman.

But the return of the lover, a lieutenant, explained all through transpiring circumstances, and she felt that she had wronged him, and gladly would have told him so, had not another dark cloud loomed up to cast in gloom the brightening horizon.

That cloud was the fateful, fearful story she had heard of her father's sins from the lips of one who called himself a pirate.

She had heard him ask for her hand, and the plot he intended to play to win it.

She had heard his threat should she not become his wife, and to save her father's honor and all, she had determined to accept the sacrifice.

To do this she must discard Lord Trenholm, and worse, far worse, she must tear the image of Reginald Rossmore from her heart, and become the bride of a pirate.

True, he had said he would reform if she became his wife, but he was nevertheless an outlaw.

Yet he had saved her life at the risk of his own; he had been wronged by his king, his comrades and his kinsman, and she pitied him.

If, therefore, she could reform him, and atone for her father's crimes toward him, and more, save that father's honor and good name before the world, she would do so.

Such were Lady Coraline's thoughts as she was preparing to go down to see her visitor.

And his thoughts were wild with hope one moment, and down with despair the next.

He had boldly sought to know his fate at once, taking advantage of the Governor being at the Oleander to do so, and he paced the floor nervously while waiting.

Suddenly he started like one caught in a guilty act, as he heard the rustle of silk upon the hall floor.

Then Lady Coraline, pale, sad-faced and resolute, swept into the room, closing the door behind her.

He would have sprung forward to greet her, but that haughty look and mien waved him off.

"Lady Malcolm! Coraline!" he said, in a low tone, extending his hand.

She simply touched it with her finger-tips, and said in a voice that was firm:

"Be seated, Lieutenant Rossmore, and tell me why I am honored with so unexpected a visit from you?"

She glided to a chair as she spoke and sat

down, where the light from the candelabras could not fall upon her face.

But he remained standing, hurt, half-angry, not knowing what to say.

The maiden was the mistress of the situation and said again:

"Perhaps the visit was intended for my father?"

"No, it was intended for you, Lady Coraline, and I have come to explain my sudden going away, for I dared not write, and to ask if the rumor I have heard is true, that you are pledged to become the wife of Lord Trenholm St. Ledger?"

He spoke in a low, earnest tone, and she noticed that his voice quivered.

She longed to tell him that she had doubted him, having been led to do so by her father, and that she loved him alone; but she crushed back the desire in her heart, and said, coldly:

"There is no explanation needed, Lieutenant Rossmore."

"Starting out in the world, as we were, we met and became engaged."

"It was a sad mistake, and the past must be as though it was never what it was, for I am pledged to become the wife of Lord Trenholm, whom my father desires me to marry."

"Coraline! in Heaven's name, what have I done that I hear those words from lips that have ever spoken to me so sweetly in the past?"

"I beg, Lieutenant Rossmore, that you will forget the past—our past—and also that we were ever more than friends, for friends only can we be in the future; but no more, no more."

He looked straight into her face and it did not quiver, and then he said, with cold courtesy:

"It shall be as Lady Coraline desires."

"I bid her good-night."

He bowed low, and she bent her head in haughty farewell, and he was gone.

But, had he stepped back into that room a moment after, he would have found Coraline Malcolm kneeling upon the floor, her face buried in her hands, which rested upon a chair, and her whole frame trembling with sorrow and anguish, that she had had to tear from her heart the one love of her life and discard forever the man she idolized, to vow to love, honor and obey another.

But Reginald Rossmore did not turn back, did not see that picture of woe, and went on his way with anguish in his heart and the feeling that the iron had entered deep into his soul, casting out sunshine and joy from his life forevermore.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LOST AT SEA.

SEVERAL days passed away, and the excitement was still intense in the town and among the crews of the different vessels anchored in the harbor, from the largest war ship to the smallest coaster.

Perhaps the excitement was kept up from the fact that both the Superb and the Surf Bird were still absent, and the hope was entertained that their long stay meant the capture of Black Beard and his schooner.

The Governor had settled down once more into the even tenor of his way, as far as appearances were concerned; but those who knew him best saw that he wore a troubled air, and that his accustomed spirits had received a damper upon them.

As for Lady Coraline, she suddenly became very gay, courted society, and was most gracious to her numerous admirers, a fact that inspired hope in many, notwithstanding her known engagement to the British commodore.

Reginald Rossmore on the contrary wore a look of settled sadness, which many attributed to the loss of his vessel, which might gain him disfavor in the eyes of the king.

He had reported to the officer in command, during the absence of Lord St. Ledger, and been told to await the commodore's return, so he continued boarding at the Oleander Inn, though its comforts held no pleasure for him in his secret grief.

"Oh! if I were only rich!" he said, one day as he paced his room, which looked out upon the harbor.

"Then I could fit out a vessel and go on the duty which the king sent me to perform."

"But it is not probable that another vessel will be given me soon—Hal there comes the Surf Bird, as I live!"

His eyes had fallen upon the brig-of-war sweeping up the harbor, and he hastily went

out to hear what tidings she brought of her cruise.

Captain De Foo left his vessel as soon as the anchor was let fall, and, accompanied by two of his officers went to the Oleander, where Sir Henry Malcolm just then drove up in his carriage, having seen the vessel run up the harbor and been too anxious to await longer for news.

"Well, captain, what news?" asked the Governor, as he grasped his hand.

"The schooner outfooted me, Sir Henry, and I lost sight of her the following night, after keeping her in view for twenty-four hours."

"Where did you meet her?"

"The Superb and my brig were the last to give up the chase, as you may know, and I picked up a decoy light she had thrown overboard, and which I ran after, and was about to pour aboardside into, when I discovered my mistake."

"I signaled to the Superb, and we cruised off and on, trying to discover the rascal, but gave it up, and were heading back to port, when we heard the firing of the forts."

"Instantly we pressed on, and soon caught sight of the schooner, coming out of the harbor, and with three vessels in chase."

"Lord Trenholm signaled to them to give it up, and for me to give chase, and the Superb and brig followed in her wake."

"We dared not fire, believing you on board, and both the schooner and the Surf Bird dropped the flagship astern by daybreak."

"And where is the Superb now?"

"That I do not know, Sir Henry, for I have not seen her since, and only learned from a pilot down the harbor, that she had not returned to port, and through him also I was delighted to know of your safety, and that of your daughter."

"Thank you; but you had to give the pirate up?"

"No, Sir Henry, he gave me up, for I was following him with all speed."

"Had he not lost his topsails he could have dropped me sooner, for that Blue Belt is a witch for sailing, and the man who commands her, pirate though he be, is every inch a sailor and as brave as a lion."

"Just think how he held us all at bay by his daring, and I feel that he is the man to keep his word."

"There is no doubt of that, Captain De Foo—what is it, landlord?" and the Governor turned to the host of the Oleander, who just then entered the cosy room where the party were seated, Captain De Foo and his officers having ordered one of the inn's good "land dinners," as they called them.

"The Superb is coming up the harbor, your excellency," said mine host, with the air of a man who had important information to communicate.

Instantly the party adjourned to the wharf, and there indeed was visible the splendid ship coming up the harbor under full sail.

As she neared an anchorage she shortened sail rapidly, and then it was seen that her flag was flying at half-mast.

What could it mean?

None there could answer the question, and they stood in silent expectation as the Superb came to anchor, and a boat was sent ashore.

"Lord Trenholm is not in the boat," said the Governor, anxiously.

The next instant an officer stepped on shore, and, seeing Sir Henry, saluted politely, while he said, in a tone of sorrow:

"Sir Henry Malcolm, I am ordered by Captain Sir Barney Craig to report to you that Lord Trenholm St. Ledger was lost at sea two nights ago."

"Lost at sea?" gasped the Governor.

"Yes, Sir Henry."

"Pray explain, sir."

"We had given up the chase of the schooner the night before, and ran off in pursuit of a French sloop-of-war, which we lost sight of in the darkness, and were tacking back to port, when at midnight it was noticed that Lord Trenholm had not been seen for several hours."

"Search was made for him, and nowhere was he to be found about the ship."

"We got all the boats out with blue lights, and cruised about until daylight, but no trace of him could be found, and hence Captain Craig returned to port."

"This is a bad business, a very bad business," muttered the Governor, as he walked hastily toward his carriage which was in waiting.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SAILOR'S REVENGE.

As I have before said, Commodore Lord Trenholm was a very haughty man, severe with his officers, and almost brutal with his men.

His manner was arrogant to all who were not his equals, and his temper was hot and ungovernable to such an extent that many a poor seaman had felt the weight of his aristocratic fist.

On one occasion, when captain of a fire vessel, he had touched at a port where a young sailor lived, and the lad had asked permission to go ashore and visit his mother.

The request was refused, and as the youth had just been ordered to the vessel after a three years' cruise, before he had time to go home, and was to go upon another long voyage, he made bold to beg the noble commander to permit him leave ashore of but two hours.

The entreaty was refused with a blow, and the lad went forward.

But there he found a batch of seamen just sent on board, and one of them knew him and his family, and told him the sad news that his mother was lying at the point of death.

Again did the dutiful son face the stern commander, and told him what he had heard, and piteously implored to be allowed to go on shore, as the ship was not to sail until the morning.

Angered at the youth's persistence, Lord Trenholm had him lashed to the grating, stripped to the waist, and twenty-one lashes laid upon his bare back.

Without a murmur or a groan the youth took the punishment, and going forward, watched his chance, sprung into the sea, and swam ashore.

His back bleeding, his brain on fire, and heart full of anguish he reached his home, and was softly creeping into the room where his dying mother lay, when a sergeant and marines that had followed him in a boat, seized and dragged him away.

Again was he lashed up to the grating, and when he recovered from the blows of the cat-o'-nine-tails, the vessel was half-way across the Atlantic.

And in that time the boy had become a man, a bitter, brooding, revengeful man.

Circumstances which he could not control transferred him to another ship, and several years had passed away before he again came under the command of Lord Trenholm.

But it came about, and he became quartermaster on board the *Superb*.

His mother had died and he had not received her blessing, and Lord Trenholm was the cause, and over this he brooded day and night.

A splendid seaman he was, liked by all on board, even to the commodore, who had almost forgotten the whipping he had ordered given him years before.

But the sailor had not forgotten it, and the night that the *Superb* was tacking back to port, after giving up the chase of the *Blue Belt*, he brooded over it more than ever.

Relieved of his trick at the wheel, he walked to where Lord Trenholm was standing, leaning over the lee bulwark, and, as the order was given to "about ship," his fist fell with stunning force upon the nobleman's head, while in an instant he had seized the form in his arms and hurled it into the sea.

Not a soul but one knew who had done the act, and that one was the victim.

Into the sea he sunk, almost helpless for a minute, and then the majestic vessel was flying away upon another tack, the creaking of blocks and spars, the wash of the waters and howling of the wind through the rigging, drowning his piercing cries for help.

On bounded the *Superb* upon her course, those on board little dreaming of the dark deed done upon her decks, and that their commodore was then struggling for life amid the dark waters.

And forward among his shipmates went the sailor, treasuring in his heart revenge upon the man who had disgraced him before his fellows, and kept him from the side of his dying mother.

A bitter revenge it was, but the honest heart of the sailor had been warped by the cruel nature of his commander, who cast the shadow upon his life which would never be effaced.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A VOICE FROM THE WAVES.

HAVING dropped his three pursuers, or rather run beyond their range of fire, Black Beard was congratulating himself upon his escape when he suddenly sighted the lights of two other vessels, so heading as to cross his bows unless he changed his course.

Relinquishing the wheel to Talbot, he leveled his glass upon the nearest, and said after an instant:

"That is the *Superb*, and she is very fast."

Then he glanced at the second vessel and continued:

"And the other is the *Surf Bird*, and faster."

"Then we will have to press on harder yet, sir," replied Talbot.

"Yes, I will let her fall off until I get all the sea room I want, and then they can follow me."

"I wish I had my topsails, but without them the schooner must outsail yonder vessels; but see, the *Superb* is signaling."

Signals were now being made upon the *Superb*, the result of which was the three cruisers astern were seen to put about to give up the chase, while the flagship and brig came dashing on.

But the result the reader already knows, and that the nimble-footed schooner outran her foes.

Having eluded the *Surf Bird* in the darkness of the following night, Robert Tichborne changed his course and headed back toward the coast.

The following night, when nearing the land, which he intended to keep near on account of the paucity in number of his crew, his quick eyes sighted a large vessel running without her lights being set.

The schooner did not show any lights, and being much smaller than the large vessel, Black Beard felt certain that he had not been seen from the other's deck.

He was so near the vessel that he dared not put about for fear of attracting attention by the creaking of blocks and flapping of sails, so called to several seamen to aid him, and letting go the halyards allowed the sails to come down at a run, leaving the schooner under bare poles.

Had he not done so, and been quick about it, there is no doubt but that the schooner would have been sighted, and brought under a broadside of the large vessel, which he now recognized as the *Superb*, though he had not expected to see her in that locality.

To within a few cable lengths of the schooner the *Superb* came, and then all on the *Blue Belt* gave a sigh of relief as they distinctly heard the order:

"Ready about!"

The large vessel minded her helm beautifully, swept gracefully around upon the other tack and dashed away, to the great joy of those on the schooner.

But hardly had she grown shadowy by distance, when Black Beard cried out:

"Ho, Talbot! do you not hear a hail?"

"From whence could it come, captain, for the *Superb* is the only vessel in sight, and she is too far distant to hear a voice from her."

"True; but I distinctly heard a human cry."

"You have good ears, Captain Black Beard," answered Talbot, calling the pirate by the name he chose to be known by to his men.

"And they have not deceived me—hark!"

"Ho! ho! Ahoy!"

The voice was faintly heard, but there was no mistaking that it was a voice, and from the waves.

"Up with those sails, lads, for some one cries for help!" called out Black Beard, and in two minutes the schooner was moving along in the direction from whence the sound had come.

"Ahoy! ahoy!"

Again the voice was heard, and from the waves it came.

"Ay, ay, whereaway!" rung out Black Beard in trumpet tones. All listened attentively for a reply.

"Two points off your starboard bow—and I am drowning!"

"Ay, ay, my man!"

"Keep up heart, for we will soon have you on board," cried Black Beard cheerily, and then he continued:

"Lower away the starboard boat, lads, as we sail."

"Spring into her, four of you men, and get your oars ready."

"Luff sharp, helmsman!"

The orders were obeyed, and himself springing into the stern the boat was lowered, and hardly had the keel touched the water when the oarsmen bent to their work.

A few strong strokes and the boat was sent rapidly over the rough waters.

"Whereaway now, shipmate?" called out the pirate.

"Dead ahead! Come quick, for I am sinking!"

The voice was fainter now, and the men bent their oars double in sending the boat forward.

"Way 'nough! there he is. Now, my man, I have you all right, and Davy Jones is cheated this time."

As he spoke, Black Beard seized the drowning man, drew him into the boat, and not a moment too soon, for the limp form showed that he was utterly prostrated, and the lips could utter no word of thanks.

Back to the schooner went the boat, and the rescued man was lifted on board and borne to the cabin.

Once under the cabin lamp and the eyes of the pirate fell upon a man in full uniform, and a face that he seemed to know, for he cried suddenly:

"Lord Trenholm, by all the saints!"

The eyes of the British commodore slowly opened and were fixed upon the face of his rescuer, while he said faintly:

"Yes, I am Lord Trenholm."

"And you?"

"I, my lord, am known as Black Beard the Buccaneer," was the cool reply.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BUCCANEER AND THE COMMODORE.

LORD TRENHOLM, the British commodore, was a man of nerve, and possessed courage, which virtues could not be denied him even by his enemies.

But yet he started at the name of the one to whom he owed his life.

Incumbered by his uniform, he had found it hard work to sustain himself in that rough sea, and had given up in despair when he saw the *Superb* sail away in the darkness.

But just then he had caught sight of the hull and bare poles of a vessel rise upon a wave, and not so very far distant from him.

Instantly renewed hope came to him, and lustily he hailed, and his stentorian voice caught the ear of Black Beard, with a result already known.

Half blinded by the salt spray, he had not taken particular notice of the vessel, but supposed it some coasting schooner until he was lifted on board, and then he believed, when he dimly saw that she was armed, that it was perhaps a Government vessel.

The blow he had received half dazed him, for it had been a severe one, and even under the startling knowledge that he had been rescued by the very man he had been hunting down to hang, did not rouse him fully.

"You are suffering, my lord, and exhausted, so let me offer you a glass of brandy and leave you to rest, as soon as you have disrobed yourself of your wet clothing and replaced them with some of mine," said Black Beard in his courteous way.

Lord Trenholm was astounded, for he found the pirate a gentleman in manner at least.

But he made no reply, simply bowed his thanks, drank the brandy, and when the pirate left him changed his clothing and threw himself down to rest.

Almost instantly he sunk into a deep sleep, and when he awoke it was broad daylight.

At first he found it hard to collect his scattered senses, but soon he did so, and found that his neck was sore from the blow of the revengeful sailor.

To his nostrils came the odor of breakfast, and soon the pirate entered, and said pleasantly:

"Good-morning, Lord Trenholm, and accept my assurance that I am glad to see you better, and my congratulations that you escaped death."

The commodore bowed and said:

"Thank you, sir; but am I right in believing that I heard you say last night that I owe my escape to Black Beard the Buccaneer, or did I dream it?"

"It is true, sir, for I am Black Beard," was the smiling response.

"The very man I was in chase of?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Whom we ran out to sea, lost sight of, and

returning found running out of the harbor we had left only a short while before?"

"The same, my lord."

"Whom I left the Surf Bird pursuing, with more hope of success, and now find here near the coast."

"I doubled again on your fleet Surf Bird, my lord."

"So it seems, and De Foe is now doubtless looking for you a hundred or more miles from here."

"I hope so, Lord Trenholm."

"And Governor Sir Henry Malcolm, what of him?" suddenly asked the nobleman.

"It was returning him to his home that kicked up all that row with the forts and your fleet, my lord," said Black Beard with a light laugh.

"And you did this, sir?"

"I returned Governor Malcolm to his home, if that is what you mean, Lord Trenholm."

"And the Lady Coraline?"

"Of course went with her father, as did also the officer, Lieutenant Rossmore, from whom I took this schooner and his men."

"I landed them all in safety, my lord, and then had to run the gantlet to sea."

"And by Heaven you did it grandly," cried the nobleman in a burst of enthusiasm at the daring deed.

"Thank you, Lord Trenholm: but now, sir, do me the honor to breakfast with me, and be good enough to make yourself at home upon my schooner."

"My servant has dried your uniform for you, and it may be more comfortable to you than a pirate's rig," and Black Beard pointed to the brilliant uniform lying near.

"Well, sir; you are a remarkable man, I must say, and I owe you my life, and know not how to repay—"

"Do not thank me, Lord Trenholm, for I would take your life as willingly as I saved it, if there was cause for me to do so."

"You are in misfortune, and therefore my guest and not my prisoner, and in time I shall return you to your vessel, but for the present must take you on a short cruise with me."

"I must submit, sir, and can but do it with good grace under the circumstances."

"I was struck a severe blow by a seaman I saw standing near me, and then, while I was half stunned by it, he hurled me overboard, and but for you I would now be at the bottom of the sea."

"A seaman of your own vessel do this, my lord?"

"Yes, a quartermaster whom I rather liked, and who was a good seaman."

"What motive could he have had, my lord?"

"I recall that some years ago, when he was a lad under me, he sought to go ashore to visit his parents, and I refused."

"He came to me again with the request and a trumped-up story, as I believed, that his mother was dying, and I ordered the 'cat' laid on him."

"Then he jumped overboard and swam ashore, and an officer and men found him at his home, and brought him back, and then I ordered him lashed most severely."

"And was his mother dying, my lord?"

"It seems that she was."

"Then he has simply bided his time to avenge himself upon you, Lord Trenholm, and you owe it to a pirate that he did not make his revenge complete."

"My revenge upon him shall be complete, sir, I'll wager," was the significant reply of the British commodore, as he seated himself at the breakfast-table of his pirate host.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CUBAN PLANTER.

UPON the northern shores of the island of Cuba, there stands an old Spanish villa, or hacienda, which, though it has not been occupied for long years, still bears the traces of having been, a century ago, one of the grandest houses in Spain's "Gem of the Antilles."

The lands about it are now owned by a wealthy Cuban gentleman, who has built him a palatial abode a mile away from the old homestead, which has been left as a picturesque ruin upon the broad acres.

Strange stories, weird and thrilling in their character, have been told of the old ruin since it was the home of wealth and luxury, and the country folk about care not to be found in its vicinity after night, while the slaves of the

planter-owner would as soon think of treading alive the confines of Perdition as to go near it.

Pirates have been said to have had it for their haunt, coast-smugglers there stowed their booty, it was whispered, and worse still, it was proclaimed far and wide to be the abode of spirits other than those found in the freebooters' casks.

In other words, it was said to be haunted.

At one time its owner, a Cuban planter, was well off in this world's goods.

He had about him a pleasant family, and took life easy.

But he took to gambling, and *peso* by *peso* his inheritance went from him, until he was forced to sell out his estate.

The one to whom he sold it dwelt there at odd times for awhile, and then no more was heard of him, no heir came to claim what he had left, and thus the house became deserted and a ruin.

It is to that old ruin I would have my reader accompany me.

Yet not when it is a ruin, but in its days of prosperity, or rather when its Cuban owner seemed prosperous to those who did not know how deeply he was involved in debt, incurred from his love of gaming.

The planter was pacing his broad veranda with moody brow and set mouth, now and then turning his eyes upon the broad, blue waters spread out before him, as though he longed to sail on them far from trouble and sorrow.

Suddenly around a point of land a vessel came in sight, and he gazed upon her with considerable interest.

Closely watching her movements, he saw her head in toward an anchorage as night came on.

He was called by a slave to join his family at tea, and the meal had just concluded when a visitor was announced.

The planter started, for visitors of late to him meant trouble.

"Who is it, Juan?" he asked the slave.

But Juan did not know, and he entered the reception-room, brightly lighted with wax tapers, to find there one the sight of whom caused him to start and turn pale.

"Don Carilla, I fear my coming surprises and pains you," said the visitor, speaking in perfect Spanish.

"It does surprise me, Captain Roberto, I admit; but you are welcome," answered the hospitable Cuban.

"I have come to see how you have succeeded since last we met."

"I have ruined myself, that is all, for this house and slaves, as you know, are yours, you having won them in Havana a year ago."

"I gave you ample, I thought, to redeem your losses with," said the visitor with surprise.

"I know it, but it is all gone, and now you have come to take what is left, and myself and family are homeless."

Not so bad as that, for I believe your wife has an estate in Spain."

"True, but we have nothing to live on after we get there, until the estate supports us, and in fact I have not the means to go there," dejectedly said the planter.

"Don Carilla, you need not think I am going to lecture you, for it would be indeed a case of Satan rebuking sin; but you should give up gambling, having as you do, a family to look to you."

"This place I need for myself, and I won it fairly from you, and more, gave you a large sum of money to stake you that you might try to win sufficient to buy it back."

"You have lost that money, and are an unlucky man at gaming, so give it up."

"Leave here, go to Spain and dwell upon your wife's estate, and build up your shattered fortunes."

"But I am not worth a hundred *pesos* in money."

"Promise me that you will never gamble again, and I will give to you in cash five thousand *pesos*, which will be ample for all your uses for the next year, and your own and your family's immediate body-servants you can carry with you."

"By the Virgin, señor, but you are generous and I give you the promise willingly."

"But I must have this house at once."

"Within three days, señor."

"That will do."

"Now what will you take for your *goleta*?"

* A small craft much in use in the West Indies years ago, and used by planters as pleasure yachts. —THE AUTHOR.

"It is under mortgage to a Spanish naval officer for three thousand *pesos*."

"Pay off the money, for I will give you five thousand for it."

"Most generous, señor."

"Nonsense, I am not generous, for I am simply making use of you to gain my own ends."

"Now, señor, within three days I will return to take possession of your home and your yacht, so please have all in readiness to deliver to me."

"You will remain my guest, captain, at least for the night?"

"No, I must depart at once, thank you, Señor Carilla," and the visitor returned to his vessel, which at once held on up the coast.

But upon the morning of the third day the vessel again dropped anchor in the little harbor, and Don Carilla was ready to give up to its new owner the beautiful house, with its numerous slaves, and pretty *goleta* that lay anchored in full view of the mansion.

With tearful eyes Don Carilla and his family left their home forever, and the new owner took possession.

For several days, the man who had won the princely abode and its slaves, upon the turn of a card, enjoyed its comforts, and then he set sail in his vessel leaving the *goleta* still at anchor in the harbor.

But, before sailing he went on board the pleasure craft, where was an officer and six slaves as a crew, and said:

"Talbot, you understand my instructions?"

"Yes, Captain Black Beard, I am to run down to Havana, and ship a crew of a score good men, and then sail for Beaufort, on the Atlantic coast, and wait there until your arrival."

"That is right, so be careful to make no mistake."

"I will be careful, Captain Black Beard."

"I know that you will, my faithful Talbot."

"Now, here is the gold for what expenses you will have to incur, and success attend you."

Black Beard, for he it was whom the Cuban planter knew as Captain Roberto, then returned on board the Blue Belt, which at once got under way and ran out of the harbor, bound upon some mission hatched in the scheming brain of her daring commander.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BLACK BEARD'S BOLD VENTURE.

UPON a rugged island of the West Indies, inhabited by a wild class of men, who were suspected of being smugglers and wreckers, and were not adverse to taking a hand in piracy, a group of several persons were standing upon a point of land, watching the approach of a schooner that came swiftly on under the pressure of a six-knot breeze.

"Yes, it is the Blue Belt at last, and now I am to be released from my captivity among these hated people," said one of the group, upon whom a second glance is not necessary to recognize Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, although his uniform looks a little the worse for rough usage.

His companions were rough, hardy-looking men, dressed in sailor costume, and bearing that in their faces which denoted plainly that they were, for a consideration, ready "to scuttle a ship or cut a throat."

They were some of the inhabitants of the island, more of whom could be seen back by a row of cabins that stood in the interior, and fronting upon a small basin, where half a dozen small luggers and sail-skiffs were at anchor.

In an hour's time the Blue Belt ran into the basin and fired a gun, which the wreckers seemed to understand, for one of them called to Lord Trenholm:

"I say, cap'n, that means fer us ter bring yer out ter ther skunner; an' we hain't sorry ter lose yer comp'ny, fer yer hain't ther most fascinatin' o' yer sex."

The British commodore scowled at this frank opinion, and said hotly:

"I would like to have you devils on my vessel for awhile, and I think I could tame you."

"Oh, we is tame enough, cap'n, ef we isn't rubbed ag'in' ther fur; but come, fer ther boat is ready."

This request Lord Trenholm willingly obeyed, and in ten minutes more Black Beard met him at the gangway.

"I am sorry to have left you so long, my lord, among these wild fellows, but it was un-

avoidable, and I was detained beyond my expected time."

"It would have certainly been pleasanter for me on your vessel, sir, even though under the shadow of your sable flag."

"I know it, my lord; but I had to ask you to remain on the island, as I did not care to place you in confinement, nor to discover the mission upon which I had gone."

"Now, my lord, we will head for Charleston, and in a few days you will be again upon your own vessel."

"Pardon me, while I reward these men for taking such good care of you," and Black Beard walked forward and joined the boatmen at the gangway.

Addressing the one who had so freely expressed his opinion to Lord Trenholm, he said:

"Jack, divide this purse among you, and tell Captain Brand to go to the other retreat for a few months, as the first spot my Lord Trenholm will seek when he reaches his vessel will be this island."

"I know it, sir, for he said as much; but I'll tell Cap'n Brand, and we thanks you, sir."

The boatmen saluted politely and the schooner at once got under way once more and headed on a northerly course, while the boat returned to the island.

With fair and fresh winds the Blue Belt made a good run of it northward, and arrived off Charleston one night of storm, when the sea seemed black as ink and the sable clouds almost mingled with the waters.

The lights of the forts shone dimly ahead, and in the distance the glow from the town was just visible.

Black Beard had timed the running in to be just after darkness had settled upon sea and land, and with only just sail enough set to keep good steerageway, he headed up the harbor, to the great surprise of the British commodore, who stood by his side upon the deck.

"Do you intend to run into the harbor, sir?" asked Lord Trenholm, amazed at the boldness of the pirate.

"Yes, my lord."

"You will risk your vessel, yourself and crew again in a fort-guarded port filled with armed vessels?"

"Certainly, my lord, for it is my intention to return you in safety to your vessel?"

"Do not venture too much, Sir Pirate, for I offer no promises to permit you to run out again."

"Nor do I ask any, Lord Trenholm."

"The forts will open upon you."

"No fear of that, for they cannot see the schooner a cable's length off such a night as this."

"See! we cannot see half the length of the schooner."

"You will run ashore in this blackness."

"I took the precaution to bring with me from the Indies, my lord, a pilot who knows this harbor as he does the deck of a vessel."

"Well, if you are caught, don't appeal to me to save you, for I shall not, I give you fair warning."

"Wait until I ask before you refuse me, my lord."

"You had better stand off and on until morning, and then signal the fort to send a life-boat out for me."

"I prefer to run up to the town, my lord," was the cold response, and the schooner held on her way through the darkness, a skillful pilot at the helm.

As Black Beard had predicted, the lookouts on the forts failed to discover the schooner in the blackness of the storm, and in fact they had hunted the lee of some friendly shelter and were leaving the fort to take care of itself.

Having gained a point opposite the Governor's mansion, the schooner headed inshore and dropped anchor within easy reach of the little pier.

"You intend to land me here, sir?" said Lord Trenholm, not particularly caring to meet Lady Coraline in his then seedy appearance.

"I intend, my lord, to place you safely in charge of the Governor-Commandant, whom it is my wish to have join you on board the schooner."

Lord Trenholm looked suspicious and asked:

"Do you meditate harm to his excellency?"

"None whatever, my lord, I assure you."

"I simply have a little duty to perform while in port which he can aid me in."

"To go to his mansion would be too great a risk, unless I went with force sufficient to seize his guard; and violence I wish to avoid."

"I beg pardon, then, to write a line to Governor Malcolm, telling him you have returned, and I will have him to return with your messenger on board ship."

"I will lead him into no trap, Sir Pirate!"

"Again I assure you, my lord, that I mean him no harm."

"I cannot do it, for I doubt you."

"Very well. Although it is an abuse of hospitality, I can but return you to the Wreckers' Island and leave you there until you consent."

"Ah! then your pretended honor—"

"Hold! Not a word, my lord, for I will not hear it."

"I ask you to send for Sir Henry Malcolm, and I pledge you that you are both free to go as soon as he performs one little act for me."

"He may refuse."

"He will not."

"You may force him to do what you wish by threats?"

"I will ask it of him, and he will do as I wish."

"Come, my lord, will you enter the cabin and write the note to Sir Henry, or will we return to the Wreckers' Island?"

"I will write the note, but under protest," and the nobleman angrily turned away and entered the cabin. Paper, a quill and ink were placed before him, and at the dictation of Black Beard Lord Trenholm wrote:

"ON SHIPBOARD, Oct. 10th, 17—."

"To His Excellency, Governor Sir Henry Malcolm:—"

"Sir:—Having miraculously been saved from death and returned in safety to port, as it is impossible for me to visit you, may I beg that you do me the honor of returning with my messenger to see me?"

"I would not request it upon a night so inclement were it not most urgent."

"I have the honor to be"

"Your excellency's obedient servant."

"TRENHOLM, Lord of St. Ledger."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JACK BRANDON'S FATE.

THE note written by Lord Trenholm to Governor Malcolm was given by Black Beard to the boatswain of the schooner, who was serving as a quarter-deck officer in the absence of Talbot, the pirate lieutenant, and a boat was sent ashore with the messenger, who was dressed in the uniform of a British sailor for the occasion.

Half an hour passed away before the keen ears of the pirate detected the sound of the boat returning, for it was too dark to see it.

"He, my man, this is not the Superb," was heard in the tones of the Governor, as the boat came to the lee gangway of the schooner.

"No, your excellency, it is the vessel that brought Lord Trenholm back to port, sir," answered the messenger, and the Governor mounted the gangway and was led to the cabin.

It was so intensely dark, and he was not thorough seaman enough to note the vessel as one he had seen before, and muffled up to the eyes he passed on and descended the companionway, to suddenly start back with the cry:

"By Heaven! I am betrayed, for this is the pirate schooner."

"No, my dear Governor, you are not betrayed," and Lord Trenholm came forward with extended hand.

Instantly reassured the Governor greeted him most warmly, congratulated him upon his return, and then said:

"But to bring back the Blue Belt as a prize is a grand stroke, and I hope her commander lies at the bottom of the sea."

"On the contrary, Governor Malcolm, he is here to welcome you as his guest," and Black Beard came forward from the starboard state-room.

Instantly the Governor was upon his feet, his hand upon his sword-hilt; but Lord Trenholm said quickly:

"Be seated, Sir Henry, and I will explain this strange scene."

Amazed, wondering, and believing himself again in the power of his foe, Governor Malcolm sunk into his chair, with the words:

"An explanation is certainly needed, my Lord Trenholm."

In a few terse words Lord Trenholm told the story of his strange adventure, and ended with a threat that the morrow would end the days of his intended assassin.

"What did you say his name was, my lord?" asked Black Beard quietly.

"Brandon! Jack Brandon he is called on shipboard."

"I have a curiosity to see this man I must face to face with one he believes he has killed," said Governor, will you kindly write a note to Captain Craig, asking him to send the seaman, Jack Brandon, to you as you wish to interview him upon certain matters?"

"Why should I do so, sir?" haughtily asked the Governor.

"Merely to please me, my dear Governor."

"I can see no reason for such a proceeding," said Lord Trenholm.

"But I can, gentlemen, and must beg that the Governor write the note."

"If it were necessary to order the man here, I could do so," remarked the British commodore.

"Pardon me, my lord, but you are supposed to be dead, and upon receiving your note the Superb might come to see if it was you who had really written Captain Craig, while it will not look amiss for the Governor to do so."

"But I refuse, sir."

"My dear Governor, did you for a moment think that I had no other motive in sending for you, than to have you meet Lord Trenholm in my cabin?"

"I know not your motive, sir, and if as Lord Trenholm says, you intend to set him free, do so at once and allow him to accompany me home, and then go your way."

"Governor Malcolm, I have a motive in wishing to see this seaman Jack Brandon, and unless you write the note I request of you, I shall send you ashore, sir; but Lord Trenholm shall sail with me this night, and he knows what his destination shall be."

"Write the note to Craig, Sir Henry, and let us see what the buccaneer's motive is in wishing the accursed assassin brought here," said Lord Trenholm bluntly.

"At your request, my lord, I shall do so," and the Governor wrote as dictated to by Black Beard, and which was a request that Captain Craig of the Superb would allow a quartermaster, one Jack Brandon, to return with his messenger, as it was urgent to have an interview with him upon a matter of importance.

Again was the boatswain dispatched with the note; and while awaiting his return, the pirate placed some of his finest wine before his guests and chatted with them as pleasantly as though he was not Black Beard the Buccaneer, upon whose head the king had two years before set a price.

His guests were by no means socially inclined, though they drank his wine, as though anxious to keep up their spirits, for somehow they doubted their pirate host and knew not what to expect at his hands.

After more than an hour's absence, during which the wind continued its fierce howling through the rigging and the schooner fretted at her anchor, the boat returned.

"Gentlemen, may I ask that you step into yonder state-room?" said the pirate, as the steps overhead told him the seaman had come.

They obeyed in silence, and then entered the boatswain with a stranger.

He was a handsome young sailor, evidently born to better fortune than serving in the fore-castle, and he looked with surprise at the boatswain and then at Black Beard.

His face was pale, stern and sad-looking, and he saluted politely though evidently surprised at being brought there.

"Your name is Jack Brandon, I believe, my man," said Black Beard.

"It is, sir," was the prompt reply.

"Do you know where you are?"

"This looks like his majesty's schooner Blue Belt, sir, which was run off with by Black Beard the Buccaneer, who led the whole fleet such a merry dance; but I must be mistaken."

"No, my man, you are not mistaken, for this is the Blue Belt."

"Then she has been retaken, sir?" asked the sailor.

"No, nor do I intend she shall be, for I am Black Beard the Buccaneer."

"Then I'll dance at the yard-arm sooner than I expected I would," was the almost reckless reply.

"Not so, my man; but I would like to ask you if you were on the Superb the night that Lord Trenholm was lost overboard?"

The man started, but answered firmly:

"I was, sir."

"Can you account for his mysterious disappearance?"

No answer was given, and the question was repeated; and then came the low response:

"Yes, sir, I could account for it; but what right have you to ask me?"

"Suppose I tell you that I know that he did not fall overboard, but was struck a stunning blow and then hurled into the sea?"

"Good God! who says this, sir?" cried the man, becoming livid.

"I say that you are the one, Jack Brandon, that struck the blow and threw Lord Trenholm into the sea, and you dare not deny it," sternly said the pirate.

"Nor will I," was the bold reply; and then in fierce tones he went on:

"I was a wild boy, sir, and I ran away from home and went to sea.

"But my mother forgave me, and told me to come back to her before she died—for she was in poor health.

"I tried to do so; but Lord Trenholm, then my captain, would not allow me even to visit her, though the ship lay hours in the port where she lived.

"I begged, but it was no use, and I got the cat for my pleading.

"In despair I sprung overboard and swam ashore, and Lord Trenholm sent after me, tore me away from my dying mother, and I was lashed to the grating and so severely flogged that it was a month before I could leave my hammock, and now on my back are the scars of the cruel blows.

"My poor mother died, and I swore revenge, and, by Heaven, I had it, even though I hang for it."

"Jack Brandon, you failed in your revenge," coolly said the pirate.

"I failed?" gasped the man.

"Yes, for Lord Trenholm was picked up at sea by this schooner and threatens to hang you to the yard-arm of the *Superb* to-morrow."

The man started, his face grew black with passion, and then growing calm, by an effort of his will, he said hoarsely:

"So be it, sir, I shall meet my fate like a man."

"Ay, but you shall be flogged until every old scar is reopened before you are hanged, you dog of an assassin," cried Lord Trenholm, stepping forth from the state-room, followed by the Governor, where both had listened to all that was said, and wondered to what it all would lead.

Jack Brandon started, his hand dropped upon his clasp-knife, and he seemed about to spring upon his enemy, as he advanced toward him.

But quickly rising, Black Beard laid a hand of iron upon his arm and said sternly:

"Put up that knife, sir!"

The seaman obeyed, and Black Beard continued:

"Jack Brandon, when I heard your story from Lord Trenholm, I pitied you, and I determined that you should not die at the yard-arm to soothe his wounded dignity, so I brought you here, and have you now on my vessel, where I offer you a position as second officer, so go on deck and attend to your duties as such, for I sail at once, and you may as well know that you serve Black Beard, the Buccaneer."

"Ay, ay, sir, and God bless you," cried the young sailor, while Lord Trenholm called out:

"Hold! Sir Pirate, this shall not be!"

"Pardon me, my Lord Trenholm, but I command this vessel, and, unless you and Governor Malcolm wish to put to sea with me to-night, you had better depart for the shore.

"Mr. Brandon!"

"Ay, ay, sir," and the young seaman turned as he had reached the companionway.

"Order the boat in readiness to convey my distinguished guests ashore!"

Jack Brandon disappeared, to almost at once return and report:

"Boat all ready, Captain Black Beard."

"Gentlemen, the night is chill, so let me urge upon you a parting glass of wine," said Black Beard.

But the commodore and the Governor were white with anger, to think they had been made tools to free the seaman who had attempted the life of his commander, and Lord Trenholm said fiercely:

"This last act, Sir Pirate, has canceled your good deed in saving my life, and I warn you that I will hunt you to the bitter end, and show you not one atom of mercy when I have you in my power."

"Nor will I ask it, my lord; but permit me to act as your escort to your waiting boat."

There was something strangely like muttered curses issuing from the lips of the two guests, as they ascended to the deck, and in grim silence they received the pirate's pleasant:

"*Bon voyage, messieurs!*"

The boat pulled rapidly away from the schooner, and as it left the side Black Beard ordered his new officer to get sail on the vessel and the anchor up with all haste.

As the boat touched the shore the Governor and Lord Trenholm sprung out, and instantly, in ringing tones, the former shouted:

"Ho, the guard! the guard!"

"Turn out the guard! Sound the tocsin of alarm!"

"Black Beard the pirate is in port!"

A mocking laugh broke from the lips of Black Beard as he heard the guard on duty at the mansion gate fire his musket in alarm.

Then lights were seen flashing in the mansion, loud voices were heard, and the alarm had gone forth.

Back, with all haste the boat pulled to the schooner, and was swung up to the davits with wonderful celerity, while the boatswain said:

"The commodore, sir, is to ride on horse-back in all haste up to town and board his vessel to come in pursuit."

"I heard him say so, sir."

"Let him do so, for he can do no other harm than alarm the forts and have them blaze away at us."

"Is all ready there?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Then let her fly!" and away the fleet schooner darted under close reefed main and foresail and jib.

Down the harbor she fairly flew, the wind coming on her starboard quarter in almost a gale, and with every man at his post, for all knew their danger should the forts open and a shot cripple them.

As they shot abreast of the first line of guns suddenly a flash and the deep boom of a gun was heard up toward the town, followed by blue lights being burned, and then a constant roar of heavy pieces.

"Lord Trenholm has reached his vessel, and he is burning powder to alarm the forts," said Black Beard, calmly.

And alarm the forts it did, for battle-lanterns flashed in the embrasures, lights were sent up, and just as she shot out of range the daring schooner was discovered.

Like peals of terrific thunder the guns boomed forth, and shrieking shot flew over the wild waters, while the crested waves wore a crimson hue under the red glare of the heavy ordnance.

Unharmed, the *Blue Belt* flew on, her pirate commander firing a broadside in sheer defiance, as he dashed out of range, and sped away like a weird specter over the dark waste of waters.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

It would be drawing it very mildly, to state that the town of Charleston was simply astounded at the tidings with which the ears of its citizens were greeted when the cause of the alarm was known that night of storm.

On his way to his vessel, Lord Trenholm, while waiting a few minutes at the *Oleander* Inn for a boat to row him out to the *Superb*, had been, of course, recognized by many, and he had not deigned to tell those who gathered around him, why he was not dead, when he had been so believed.

Going on board his vessel he had nearly caused the superstitious seaman, whose watch it was on deck, to jump overboard, and, though welcomed by his officers most enthusiastically it was evident that many had not been glad that he was supposed to be dead.

The irate nobleman however allowed no time to go by in welcoming him, but instantly ordered a general alarm to be fired, and every cruiser in port to get to sea with all dispatch.

In the fierce gale that was blowing, and the rough sea, he held high hopes that the *Superb* would be able to overhaul the little schooner, where the latter could run away from her large adversary in a lighter blow.

He also hoped that the forts might cripple the schooner, and if she did get by, that some of the fleet might overhaul her, and hence he issued his orders for quick departure in a tone that showed he was in deadly earnest and meant to be obeyed.

In whatever manner he had escaped, the offi-

cers saw that Lord Trenholm had returned with curses, instead of a prayer of thankfulness upon his lips, and in no enviable frame of mind.

In fifteen minutes after the British commodore had touched his deck the *Superb* was leading six vessels down the harbor under all the sail they could carry, and from one to the other signal lanterns were flashing about, presenting a pretty sight to the honest citizens on shore, who gazed out from their windows upon the scene.

The opening of the forts proved that the schooner was seen by them, and all held high hopes that the iron hail would end the career of the terrible rover; but when the defiant broadside of the *Blue Belt*, showed just where she was, and out of danger, all knew that the chase must be a fruitless one, unless the heavier hulls could forge faster through the rough waters, than the lighter craft.

But after her broadside the *Blue Belt* became invisible, and after long hours of fierce battling with wind and wave the dawn came, to show the cruisers all in sight of each other but nowhere visible the beautiful schooner.

With great reluctance Lord Trenholm gave the order for the fleet to put back for port, all excepting the *Surf Bird* and a large schooner, which were signaled to search the coast thoroughly all through that day.

And back to their anchorage went the cruisers, and Lord Trenholm found himself a lion indeed, yet seemed not to appreciate the congratulations showered upon him by all.

No, not by all, for there was one he had hoped to receive a note from, saying how glad she was that he had escaped death.

But that one did not write any such thing, and that was what deeply cut the returned hero, who had been saved from death by a pirate, who coolly brought him back to port to boot.

After having had a conference with the Governor, and another with the commanding officer of his fleet and the forts, Lord Trenholm, the third day following his return, ordered alongside his barge with a midshipman, coxswain and twelve oarsmen, and started down the harbor toward the gubernatorial mansion.

He was dressed in his finest, and, as he went along past the town, was endeavoring to smooth the frowns from his brow.

His destination was to call upon the Lady Coraline, and he rather felt that he was not as much a hero as the townspeople made him out, for he had failed on his cruise south, had not bullied the pirate into releasing either the Governor or his beautiful daughter, had been unsuccessful in his pursuit of the *Blue Belt*, which, outsailing his fleet and outmaneuvering his officers, had returned to port and given up his hostages himself, and then capped the climax by saving his life, and bringing him back almost to his own vessel, while he coolly rescued from his fury his intended assassin.

If the Lady Coraline would only think of his stirring adventures the past few days, and not analyze them too closely, he might pass muster for a hero; but if she put them under the lens of thought, then he might appear very small in her eyes.

As he rowed down the harbor, he spied a little sail-boat, a tiny shell out upon the water, gliding along like a feather, and with but a single occupant.

At the top of the little mast floated the flag of the house of Malcolm, and a second look at the boat caused him to recognize it as the skiff of Lady Coraline.

His glass at once went to his eyes, and he saw the face and form of the fair young mistress of the Governor's mansion.

She was out, as was often her custom, for a sail upon the harbor, and she was a skillful seawoman, he knew.

But he felt anxious, for the wind came in gusts, and several times he saw the little craft bend to her gunwale with a sudden puff.

And, as he looked, a squall suddenly shot along over the waters, and the skiff was in its path direct.

Loudly shouted Lord Trenholm, springing to his feet at the same time, his notes of warning.

But the maiden had already sighted the danger, and brought the skiff's bow up to meet it.

But the skiff was but a plaything for the rude wind, its slender mast was snapped in twain and carried far away with its sail, while

the hull was turned over and over, and the young girl left struggling in the water.

Lady Coraline was a fair swimmer, but it was a chilly day, and she was enveloped in wraps, and then, too, she was bewildered by the suddenness of the catastrophe, so saw that there was no help from her own exertions.

"Pull you devils! pull for your lives!" yelled Lord Trenholm in a frenzy, and the men bent their oars double with their tremendous exertions.

"A year's pay to every man who holds an oar if the Lady Coraline is saved," shouted the nobleman, and the large boat fairly leaped from the water at every hard pull of the oars.

But suddenly, out from the shore shot a small skiff, pulled by a single oarsman, and it headed straight toward the drowning girl.

The barge was the furthest away, and rowing at a terrific pace, urged by its twelve oars; but the skiff was light, and under seemingly the pressure of iron arms, was making faster time.

On, on, the two boats went, and the eyes of Lady Coraline rested upon them both, and she saw that the single oarsman would reach the spot first: but could she hold out until then, she wondered?

A few days before she had been willing to die, and now she felt herself struggling for life.

She saw who it was that was in the barge, even waving his sword in his excitement, over the heads of the oarsmen, and she recognized too the one who sent the skiff along at such a killing pace.

Then she felt herself going down, down, and her every effort to longer sustain herself was useless, and she gave up hope of life.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A RIVAL'S REVENGE.

THE last look of Coraline Malcolm, before she sunk beneath the waves, was upon the occupant of the skiff.

And, as the waters were about to engulf her, she saw him turn, behold her and spring to his feet.

Then she saw no more for she disappeared beneath the surface.

But the man, who had pulled his oars like a giant, had given one mighty spring, head-first into the waters, and he too was lost to sight.

The barge was yet a cable's length away, but Lord Trenholm urged it on with ringing words to the straining rowers.

Urged it on to see, ere he reached the spot where the Lady Coraline had sunk, the brave swimmer rose to the surface, and in his strong arms he held the limp form of the maiden.

A few powerful strokes carried him to his skiff, and Lady Coraline was placed tenderly in it, and with a skillful spring her preserver followed and seized the oars, just as the barge shot up to the spot.

Without a word the oarsman sent his skiff flying shoreward, toward the mansion pier, where Sir Henry and a crowd of servants were already assembled.

"Hold, sir, and I will bear that lady home," shouted Lord Trenholm, as his barge shot by, he having given no orders to his oarsmen to cease rowing.

"Pardon me, my lord, but delay may prove fatal, and I can reach the shore the sooner," was the bold answer, and without once checking his tremendous strokes.

"What! do you disobey me, sirrah?" yelled the nobleman.

"Under the circumstances, my lord, my duty is to this lady," came back the answer.

Lord Trenholm was in a towering rage, and struck the coxswain with the back of his sword, because he had not put the barge about without orders, cursed the oarsmen for not having ceased rowing without being commanded to do so, and scowled at the midshipman.

But all to no purpose, for when the heavy barge got fairly upon its way to the shore, the light skiff had landed, and its bold oarsman had sprung out, bearing Lady Coraline in his arms.

"Sir Henry, the Lady Coraline has become unconscious, and the greatest haste to restore her is necessary," he said, as the Governor grasped his daughter in his arms, and, without a word to her preserver, hastened toward the house, followed by the servants.

The brave rescuer then retraced his steps to his skiff, and stood there, dripping and exhausted, as Lord Trenholm sprung ashore.

"By the king, Reginald Rossmore, you shall

wear the uniform of a naval officer no longer, for this day's work," he shouted.

"In what have I offended, my lord?" calmly asked the young lieutenant.

"You disobeyed my command, sir," was the hot reply.

"I felt that the life of Lady Coraline was at stake, my lord, and acted to save her; but I am ready to receive any reprimand you deem I deserve."

"Go to your vessel, sir, and report yourself under arrest."

"You forget, my lord, that I have no vessel, and I have been awaiting your return to be assigned to duty," was the calm response.

"By Heaven! you are right, for you allowed your vessel to be taken from you by a pirate, and you deserve the severest punishment for it."

"Midshipman Vennor, take this officer back to the Superb, and tell Captain Craig that my orders are to put him in irons, to be sent to England for trial."

"I will return by the town," and Lord Trenholm turned away, and hastened toward the mansion.

As for Reginald Rossmore, he was dazed at the stern order, and the conduct of their superior was felt by the midshipman and his men as base in the extreme, for the former said in a low tone:

"He's jealous, sir, because you saved the Lady Coraline; but I must do my duty, Lieutenant Rossmore, so please enter the barge and return with me."

"Willingly, sir," and Reginald Rossmore, smothering his emotions, sprang into the stern-sheets, and took his seat.

"Back water!" called out the middy, and the barge started upon her return to the vessel.

Hardly had she left the shore a score of lengths, when the eyes of the middy fell upon a strange-looking vessel gliding up the harbor toward the town.

"There is a pretty craft, Lieutenant Rossmore," he said.

"Yes, it is a West Indian, doubtless, from her rig," answered Reginald, gazing at the sharp-bowed little craft, with two slender masts, rigged for lateen sails, and which had the appearance of a stanch sea boat and fast sailer.

Everything about her was in perfect trim, and her crew of about a score of men, were visible forward, gazing over the high bulwarks at the scenery of the harbor, as she glided along, while upon her quarter-deck, besides the man at the tiller, was a tall personage pacing to and fro, and with a glass in his hand, which he occasionally leveled at something on shore, or at the shipping ahead.

"Yes, she's a Spaniard, sir, for I have often seen that class of craft in the Indies."

"They call them *carreras*, which I believe means 'runners,' and they deserve the name, I can tell you."

"The Cuban planters on the coast use them for yachts a great deal," said the midshipman, anxious to show his knowledge, and he ordered the coxswain to point the barge so as to get a nearer look at the really beautiful little vessel.

"She has two small brass sea-pups, one to a broadside, sir, as you see, and an iron pivot, which I judge to be an eighteen, mounted fore and aft," continued the middy.

"Doubtless the pleasure-craft of some West Indian planter cruising with his family," suggested Reginald.

"The planter I see, if planter he be, sir; but not the family, and if they were on board they ought to be on deck enjoying the scenery of the harbor."

"I only hope that he has a family with him, for these Spanish-American girls are as pretty as pictures, and have most killing eyes, while they are as graceful as swans and waltz like a zephyr."

"You seem to have had a great deal of experience in southern seas," said Reginald Rossmore, with a smile.

"I have, sir, for I have sailed with my Lord Trenholm for three years, while he has been hunting in all the ports where we dared touch for a rich wife, although he's got plenty of money himself to satisfy any ordinary man."

"But now there is a comparative peace prevailing on the other side of the Atlantic, we naval officers can get better acquainted upon this side—but hark! the stranger is hailing."

"Ho! the launch!" came in English, though spoken with an accent, and it was evidently

the tall personage on the *carrera* that had hailed.

"Ahoy the *carrera*!" sung out the middy. "Will the *Senor Americano* kindly tell me where I may have anchorage for my yacht?" asked the supposed planter in courteous tones.

"Anywhere below the town the *senor* will find good anchorage, or beyond the shipping, if it suits him better," replied the middy, politely, and in Spanish, as though anxious to show his knowledge of that language.

The *carrera* at once starboarded her helm, and ran just astern of the launch, giving those on board a better look at her, and at the really splendid looking man who had so courteously raised his hat at the reply of the young middy.

He was a man of striking presence, attired in citizen's dress, and had a dark face, cleanly shaven, and short black hair, while his eyes were black and piercing.

Running closer inshore, the *carrera* dropped anchor within a stone's throw of the Oleander Inn, and was already an object of curiosity to the idlers on the piers, while the man-of-war's boat continued on to the Superb, and the midshipman making his report, Reginald Rossmore was at once sent below decks and put in irons, to the great regret of all the officers who had known him, and with whom he was most popular.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

KENDRICK'S FRUITLESS MISSION.

WHEN Lord Trenholm reached the mansion, he was shown into the Governor's private room, by Kendrick, who knew the situation of affairs well, and there, with a decanter of wine, he consoled himself until the coming of his host.

"Well, my lord," said the Governor, entering with a smiling face:

"My child is restored once more, and the doctor, who was fortunately near here at the time, says that she will be herself within the hour."

"I congratulate you, Sir Henry, from my inmost heart."

"I would have been happy of the honor of saving Lady Coraline, and could have done so, had not that young Rossmore come between."

The Governor knew that this was a direct falsehood, for he had seen all, and, besides, Lady Coraline had just said consciousness left her, and she sunk, while Reginald Rossmore was yet in his skiff, and the barge a hundred lengths away.

But the Governor knew that the nobleman was heir to higher rank yet, and was possessed of vast estates, and hoping that he would yet be his son-in-law, he wisely held his peace about what he had seen, and spoke of what he had hoped it would be.

"Yes, my lord, and I sincerely hoped you would reach my drowning child in time; but that young Rossmore pulled a stroke I never saw equaled."

"His skiff was but a shell, while my barge is very heavy."

"Yes, my lord, that is true; but you will dine with me to-day, and in the mean time drive with me out to my plantation, where I have to go this morning."

"With pleasure, Sir Henry, and I hope that Lady Coraline will be able to honor us with her presence at dinner, for I came especially to call upon her."

"She doubtless will have sufficiently recovered, my lord."

"Now I will order the carriage," and Kendrick was at once dispatched to the stables.

In a short while the vehicle rolled up to the door, with its four spirited horses, two postillions and two footmen, and entering it the Governor and the commodore were whirled rapidly away to the country.

At the window sat Lady Coraline, her maid combing out her luxuriant hair, and though pale, looking very beautiful in her *robe-de-chambre*.

Seeing the carriage roll away, and knowing whence her father had gone, she said quickly:

"Martha, bid Kendrick go to the Oleander Inn and ask Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore to do me the honor of calling upon me at once!"

"Yes, my lady," answered the pretty maid, and leaving the room she reported that Kendrick had departed in haste upon his errand.

Preferring to ride, rather than walk, in the absence of his master, Kendrick had taken a horse from the stables, and consequently soon reached the inn.

Upon asking for the young lieutenant, the landlord said in a serious tone:

"Do you not know where the lieutenant is, my man?"

"I expected to find him here, sir," answered Kendrick, who was always glad to visit the inn, as mine host never forgot a mug of ale, or goblet of wine for so important a personage in the Governor's household.

"Well, Kendrick, it is said that the lieutenant is under arrest."

"Under arrest! You don't mean it, sir?" cried Kendrick.

"Yes, he was sent on board of the *Superb* and put in irons."

"Has he killed his superior officer?" asked Kendrick, in a tone of horror.

"No, he did a worse crime, in the sight of his superior officer."

"Holy Mother! what has he done?"

"Saved the life of the Lady Coraline."

"Saints alive! but he did do that, and do it well, sir, and if he had not pulled like a giant the sweet leddy would be at the sea bottom this blessed minute."

"God bless him for that, sir."

"So say I, Kendrick, but he is under arrest now, and if you wish to see him, on board the *Superb* you must go."

"And I will, for I am ordered to see him."

"Then take a little goblet of wine first, my man."

This was an invitation Kendrick did not have it in his heart to refuse, and having taken an extra cup with mine host he took the inn boat and rowed out to the vessel-of-war.

He was permitted to go on board, and his request to see the young lieutenant was granted by the good hearted captain, who said bluntly:

"I have no orders to the contrary, my man."

Reginald Rossmore was found in a ward-room state-room, and in irons; but his face flushed with pleasure when he saw the well-known factotum of the Governor's mansion.

"Alas, Kendrick, you see that I cannot obey the commands of Lady Coraline, and so tell her so," he said, sadly.

"But, Lieutenant Rossmore, surely you have done nothing to cause Lord Trenholm to treat you so," boldly said the man.

"I am accused of conspiracy with the pirate Black Beard, I believe, and shall be sent to England for trial."

"I know what the trouble is, sir."

"Well, my man?"

"You outrowed twelve men to-day in the race to save the Lady Coraline," said Kendrick, boldly, and he added:

"And I'll tell her so, sir."

Finding his mission useless, Kendrick set out upon his return, stopping in at the *Oleander* to tell the host that he had seen the lieutenant, and which piece of news he knew would bring forth another goblet of wine.

Nor was he disappointed, and he reached the mansion in a high state of indignation, or intoxication, which the sorrow of Lady Coraline at what he told her, alone prevented her discovering; but he did not escape a sound setting down from the maid, Martha, upon whom he looked with loving eyes.

"Just let the Governor come home and find you drunk, sir, and—"

"I am not drunk, sweet Martha; I am angry," protested Kendrick, in a tipsy manner.

"Well, you had better go to your room and sleep off your anger, or it will be the worse for you," and with this advice Martha left him muttering:

"I guess you are right, my love; I must get over being angry before the master comes, so I'll take a short nap that I may awake in good-humor."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

DON SARANO SAGARTA.

THE landlord of the *Oleander* Inn had just parted with Kendrick, and seen that worthy started homeward, when there came to his place a stranger of striking appearance, accompanied by a foreign-looking servant and a seaman bearing luggage.

Mine host received him most graciously, for there was an air about the visitor that showed he had been born to live in luxury.

"Could the senor show him some pleasant room?"

The landlord bowed low, and stated that he had several delightful parlors, with bed-cham-

bers adjoining, and the guest was soon pleased with most comfortable quarters overlooking the harbor.

He also desired to get an equipage for his special use, a saddle-horse, and have his meals served at stated hours, all of which he was most willing to pay liberally for.

"How long might his honored guest remain?" asked the landlord.

"As long as he was pleased with the town and its people," was the reply.

The landlord was charmed, and mentally swore that it should not be his fault if he left within a year.

He found his guest to be a courtly gentleman, a handsome man, evidently a very rich one, and a Cuban, speaking English with a slight accent.

He found out from his servant that his master had large sugar estates upon the Cuban coast, and might purchase a plantation in America.

That he cruised in a *carrera* for pleasure, and owned many slaves.

After making himself at home in his rooms, Don Sarano Sagarta, as he had given his name, ordered a vehicle, in which to drive to the mansion and pay his respects to the Governor, Sir Henry Malcolm.

While waiting for the carriage he stood out upon the broad veranda, and was the cynosure of a hundred eyes, from Captain Frank De Foe and a party of brother officers, who were smoking there, to a party of idlers, who are ever the loungers in front of a hotel and tavern.

At length the vehicle drove round to the door, and Don Sarano Sagarta started for the mansion of Sir Henry.

Kendrick, after a short nap and a plentiful application of cold water, had sobered up and met him at the door.

"The Governor was not at home, but would Don Sarano enter and await his coming, for he was expected immediately?"

It pleased Don Sarano to do so, and he was ushered into the state parlors, where he beheld a fair form at the window overlooking the gardens.

She started at hearing a step behind her, and turning, was face to face with the Don.

"Will the senorita pardon me, but I am here to await his excellency the Governor, as a foreigner visiting his port, upon whom I have called?" he asked in a courtly way, bowing with extreme deference.

Lady Coraline bowed and returned:

"I am the daughter of Sir Henry Malcolm, sir, and welcome you in his name, as he is temporarily absent."

"Many thanks, senorita, and permit me to present myself as Don Sarano Sagarta, a Cuban planter."

Coraline Malcolm was a woman of remarkable nerve, and was seldom thrown off her guard; but now she started, became several shades paler, and to hide some inward emotion bowed very low.

"Is the senorita ill?" asked the Cuban quickly.

"I am nervous, senor, and trust you will pardon me, for I have not yet recovered from nearly losing my life a few hours ago while out in my sail-boat," said Coraline quickly, and the Cuban accepted the explanation as satisfactory reason for her sudden faintness, and leading her to a seat, entered into a conversation with her with a manner that was really very fascinating.

In a short while up to the door dashed the Governor's carriage, and learning that he had a distinguished foreigner awaiting in the state parlor to pay his respects to him, he bade Kendrick show Lord Trenholm to his room to prepare for dinner, while he entered the room to greet the visitor.

"Father, as I have already formed the acquaintance, in your absence, of Don Sarano Sagarta of Cuba, permit me to present him to you."

"My father, Governor Sir Henry Malcolm, Don Sagarta," said Lady Coraline in her quiet way.

The name seemed to have a familiar ring in the ears of the Governor, and he stepped forward to greet his visitor, while excusing herself, Coraline hastily left the room.

"We have met before, Don Sagarta, have we not, for your name is familiar, while your face is not," said the Governor, as he motioned his visitor to a seat.

"We have, Governor Malcolm, and at our

last meeting I told you that we would meet again," was the calm reply.

"Good God! *Don Sarano Sagarta!*"

"I recall the name now that you gave then."

"You are Robert Tichborne *tha was*, and now Black Beard *th* *Buccaneer*," fairly groaned the Governor, sinking into a chair as though he had not the strength to stand.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE UNWELCOME GUEST.

"I AM Sir Robert Tichborne Malcolm, dear cousin, I was Black Beard the Buccaneer, and now it is my intention to hail as Don Sarano Sagarta, a Cuban planter," was the reply of the pirate, delivered in the coolest tone imaginable, as he stood facing the Governor.

"You are an outlaw, a pirate, and as such I will have you hanged," hoarsely said Governor Malcolm.

"Hear me, cousin Henry, one moment."

"As I said, in law and justice I am Sir Robert Malcolm; but I have determined to waive the title and estates in your behalf."

"I was Black Beard the Buccaneer, but I have reformed, and am now the possessor of a fine estate in Cuba, with a luxurious home, a hundred slaves, and I come here in my *carrera* as a West Indian gentleman."

"Who I was not one, excepting yourself, knows, for my crew and servants are strangers to me."

"But you do know, and you know just why I came, and that your title, your wealth, and your life depend upon me."

"I'll risk all to hang you, Robert Tichborne," savagely said the Governor.

"You'll do no such thing."

"You are ambitious, you have your plantations doing well, and expect to amass large sums by them."

"You anticipate that your king will reward your valuable services here by elevating you to the peerage, and you are fond of life and very much afraid of death."

"Now all that you have you can retain, all that you expect I hope you may get; but I have come for a purpose and I will carry it out."

"Never! I will call my guards and have you shot in your tracks ere you can utter one word to criminate me."

The pirate laughed lightly, and said:

"One moment, please, Governor Malcolm, before you give your guards that order!"

"Be quick, sir!" and the Governor turned upon the pirate.

"Before coming here," he said, in slow tones, as though wishing his hearer to measure every word he uttered:

"I placed certain papers in the hands of several parties, who, upon any harm befalling me, are to proceed with them in my vessel direct to England and place them in the hands of the king."

"Those papers criminate your excellency, prove the murder of my brother, down to your hiring an assassin to take my life, and Talbot Loring, my father's tenant, who witnessed your first crime, and became your hireling afterward, will appear before the king to verify the story, while other proof of your deeds here, which might not bear inspection, will be made known to his majesty."

"Now, Governor Henry Malcolm, call your guard and order me shot down in my tracks!"

The Governor did no such thing, but returned toward his unwelcome guest, and asked pleadingly:

"In God's name what do you ask of me?"

"You well know."

"My daughter?"

"Yes."

"How do I know but that you are already married?"

"Both Lady Coraline and yourself must take the chances as to whether I am or not!" was the cool reply.

"Oh, man! have you no mercy upon that poor child?"

"That is good, Governor, when you are selling her to a man whom every one dislikes and she hates, and who will be a brute toward her in his treatment!"

"He is a man of rank and a gentleman."

"In name, yes; but we will not argue that point."

"What would you do?"

"Simply remain in your pleasant town and endeavor to win your fair daughter's love."

"As no one but yourself will know me as other than Don Sarano Sagarta, I need not

warn you that the slightest suspicion turned upon me will result in your downfall."

"No, no. I cannot consent to sacrifice my child to a— Ah! here she is!"

But it was Lord Trenholm who was ushered into the parlor by Kendrick, and there was an instant of silence, and for a moment the Governor seemed about to break the chain of fear upon him and make known the secret; but he heard the low whispered word:

"Beware!"

Turning, he smothered down his feelings and introduced the British officer to the pretended Cuban.

With the accent which he had assumed to the better carry out his character, the pirate said:

"I am glad in meeting the honorable senor, whose fame has reached my own land."

Lord Trenholm was pleased with the remark and made a pleasant response, just as Lady Coraline, superbly attired, swept into the room and joined the three, while Kendrick appearing announced dinner.

Instantly the pirate said in his pleasant way:

"My dear senorita, and Lord Trenholm, I fear I intrude upon a pleasant trio, by having accepted the kind urging of Sir Henry to remain to dinner."

"It is an honor I did not dream of, and perhaps I should retire."

The Governor's face grew black at this, but Lady Coraline said with her sweetest smile:

"My dear Senor Sagarta, I cannot permit you to depart, so you must remain with us, as our dinner is wholly informal, for I only knew a moment ago that father expected Lord Trenholm to dine with us."

"Your arm, please, and we will lead the way to the dining-room."

Lord Trenholm followed with the Governor, cursing the Cuban mentally for remaining, and little dreaming that Sir Henry was engaged in the same thoughtful profanity.

As for the dinner it was a most tempting one, for the Governor's cuisine was noted, the wines were delicious, and Don Sagarta proved himself an exceptionally charming person.

He told witty stories in his inimitable way, and with his accent, which really grew to be fascinating as one listened to it, he spoke of a number of engagements in which Lord Trenholm had figured, and made the British commodore believe himself a most famous personage indeed, and quite won his heart, by his flattery.

In spite of his inward rage the Governor was forced to be pleasant, and the pretended Cuban exhibited an intimate acquaintance with his career also, which brought smiles to the face of Lady Coraline, who knew the secret but too well.

As for the fair young girl, she never appeared to better advantage, her face was flushed by the excitement of the strange scene in which she was a participator, and she entered into the spirit of it with an almost reckless abandon that really added to her loveliness.

Not for a moment could Lord Trenholm believe that Don Sagarta was an unwelcome guest, and what troubled him was Lady Coraline's kindness toward him, and the fear that he might become too welcome a visitor at the mansion.

After dinner the party adjourned to the parlors, and the pretended Cuban showed himself a master musician, playing the Spanish guitar with rare sympathy and skill, and singing in a voice of mellow sweetness that even Lord Trenholm could not but admire.

As the nobleman had dismissed his barge, he accepted a seat back to town in the carriage of Don Sagarta, and parted with the pirate at the Oleander Inn upon most friendly terms, apparently, though in his heart he hated him for having crossed the path of Coraline Malcolm, whom the British officer loved with all his heart and soul, and perhaps the more deeply because he had no other affections among his fellow men and women.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE BROKEN ENGAGEMENT.

It was rather late when Lord Trenholm returned on board of the *Superb* in a shore boat.

He had accepted the invitation of Don Sagarta to stop at the Oleander Inn and join him in drinking a decanter of wine, and it had gone

to his head instead of softening his heart, so that he at once summoned before him his prisoner, Reginald Rossmore.

The young lieutenant had retired for the night, but arose and dressed himself to appear before his superior officer.

"Leave the prisoner alone with me, sergeant," he said to the non-commissioned marine officer who had accompanied him to the august presence of the fleet commander.

"Well, sir, this is a bad affair for you," said the commodore, sternly, gazing with fiery eyes upon the man he intended making a victim of.

"To what do you refer, my lord—my having saved the life of the Lady Coraline Malcolm, or lost my schooner?" was the cool question.

"You know well, sir, that I alluded to the loss of your vessel, and from what I can learn, you will be tried as a conspirator with that accursed pirate to have him seize the schooner."

"No such falsehood, my lord, can be proved against me, as in your heart you know," said Reginald, boldly.

"That you shall see, sir, for on the morrow the brig-of-war *Night Hawk* sails for England, and you go on her, and into her commander's hands I will intrust papers that will condemn you."

"You have the power, I admit, my lord, for you hold high rank, while I am but a simple lieutenant, and the losing of the schooner will tell against me."

"You are all-powerful and I am your victim."

"How dare you call yourself my victim, sirrah!"

"I speak but the truth, sir."

"If I did right I would hang you to the yard-arm upon the evidence I have against you."

"As you think best, my lord," was the cool reply.

Lord Trenholm felt that he was overmatched by the daring young officer, and he hastily summoned the marine sergeant, and poor Reginald was taken back to his state-room.

At an early hour the British commodore was up, and a boat was sent ashore under his orders.

It soon returned with three sailors who had been upon the *Blue Belt* with Reginald Rossmore when she was seized by the pirate chief.

"My lads," said Lord Trenholm, when they were ushered into his presence, "his majesty's brig *Night Hawk* sails to-day, and from all I have heard I have placed under arrest your late commander, Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore, for conspiring with the pirate to deliver the schooner into his hands, and you must go with the vessel to tell your story of the affair as you told it to me."

"Yes, my lord, sir," said the three men in chorus.

"Now return ashore and get your kits and go on board the *Night Hawk*, telling Captain De Lane that I ordered you to do so."

The three seamen saluted and departed, while Lord Trenholm muttered: "I really believe that the Governor bribed those three fellows to tell the story they did, for Rossmore is not guilty I am sure; but at the same time I will sacrifice him as it is within my power to do so, for after his feat to-day he will be secretly marrying the Lady Coraline."

"Well, my proud beauty, I was thwarted yesterday in seeing you, to have a talk with you, but I will try it again to-day."

And several hours after found the commodore again in his barge on his way to the gubernatorial mansion.

But he found Lady Coraline had gone riding.

"With his excellency and the Cuban gentleman, Don Sagarta, who rode by as they left the grounds," Kendrick explained.

Back to his ship the irate nobleman went, and busied himself in getting his dispatches ready to send by the *Night Hawk*.

Having seen the brig-of-war set sail, Lord Trenholm went on shore to the Oleander, and meeting some brother officers there heard the rumor that Don Sagarta had purchased a large plantation that day, and was to reside there.

This morsel of gossip did not and to the amiability of the commodore, and he swore to have an interview with Lady Coraline on the morrow, and demand that their wedding day should no longer be postponed, as he had agreed to at her urgent request.

To head off the Don in any rides that he might expect to take, Lord Trenholm went on horseback to the mansion and was warmly welcomed by the Governor.

"I am on a visit to Lady Coraline this morning specially, Sir Henry," he said:

"Very well, my lord, I will have Kendrick announce you, and entertain you until Coraline comes down, after which I must run off to my plantation."

"I called yesterday, but found you had gone out riding with Don Sagarta."

"Yes, he happened along as Lady Coraline and myself went for a ride."

"A clever man, Don Sagarta, my lord."

"Yes, he seems a most entertaining person, and I learn he intends to make his home among us."

"Yes, so he informs me; but I hear Lady Coraline coming, so will beg you to pardon my running off," and the Governor fairly bolted from the room, as though glad to get away to avoid some expected scene.

Like a queen Lady Coraline swept into the room, attired in her riding habit and hat, and with whip and gloves in hand.

"My dear Lady Coraline, I am delighted to see you looking so well, and as you are prepared for a canter, and I rode here in the saddle, it will be more than a pleasure to me to act as your cavalier."

"I intended taking a ride, my lord; but I believe now that I shall go for a sail, to try my new sail-boat which Don Sagarta sent to me this morning, with a request that I would allow it to take the place of my unfortunate little *Vixen*."

"Don Sagarta sent it, you say?" said the jealous noble in a tone of sarcasm.

"Yes, and I must say that he is a most remarkable personage."

"Don't you think so, Lord Trenholm?" and Coraline asked the question with an arch smile that was very tantalizing.

"I have nothing against the gentleman, Lady Coraline."

"Indeed! how strange, for I never heard you admit as much before of any one else."

"Lady Coraline is inclined to be facetious this morning," he said, with some anger in his tone.

"I will be then as frank as even Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, Commodore of His Majesty's Service, can wish, and say honestly that I here break the engagement which my father entered into for me," and the eyes of the maiden flashed fire.

Lord Trenholm was thunderstruck, and he showed it.

He flushed, turned pale, his lips quivered, and at last he hissed forth:

"Does Lady Coraline mean what she has just said?"

"I certainly do, my lord."

"In what have I offended?" he asked, earnestly.

"I will tell you of one act in which you offended me most bitterly."

"I am at a loss to recall any act of mine to win the censure of Lady Coraline."

"You shall not remain in ignorance, sir, when I inform you that I have heard of your having sent to your vessel, to be placed in irons, Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore, whose crime was that he saved my life."

"But, Lady Coraline—"

"Hear me, my Lord Trenholm, for I am aware that where every officer and sailor of his majesty's fleet, which you have the honor to command in these waters, believes Lieutenant Rossmore guiltless of all blame in the loss of his schooner to Black Beard the Buccaneer, you have sent him to England to be tried as a conspirator with the pirate, upon the testimony of three seamen, who, I have reason to believe, were hired to testify as they did against him, in saying that they overheard a conversation between the outlaw and their young commander, which criminated him."

"But these men told me the story, Lady Coraline, and I could but believe them."

"They were bribed to go and tell the trumped-up story to you, my lord."

"But who could have bribed them, Lady Coraline?"

"One who wished Lieutenant Rossmore well out of the way."

"And because I have done what I consider my duty, in sending the young officer to England for trial, you deem it sufficient to sever the tie of love between us?" and the man spoke with deep feeling, for it cut him to the heart to have to give up the woman he so madly loved.

"Pardon me, Lord Trenholm, but there was no tie of love between us, for I never loved you, nor have I ever told you that I did."

"On the contrary, I loved one whom you knew of, and entered into a compact to become your wife."

"Now I sever that compact, my lord, and from to-day we are not even friends."

"Pardon me, my lady, but your father, his excellency, will have something to say to this," hotly said the nobleman.

"My father, my lord, has been your strong ally and champion; but my father has no power to force me into a marriage with a man whom I detest," and she spoke the words with withering scorn.

At this his face grew livid with passion, and twice he essayed to give utterance to his fierce thoughts before he could do so.

At last, after a mighty effort at self-control, he hissed forth:

"After those words from the lips of Lady Coraline, she need have no fear that I shall demand that she keep the contract."

"Therein my Lord Trenholm shows his sound sense, for I am not one of his unfortunate sailors that must obey his arbitrary commands, and to tremble at his every look."

"Here I stand upon my own quarter-deck, and my demand is that Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, as my visitor, shall never again darken the doorway of my house."

Without another word, and unheeding his words of entreaty to hear him, for the proud man's spirit had broken before the girl's impetuous nature, she swept from the room, leaving the man almost crushed by the emotions of anger, wounded pride, and revengeful feelings that overwhelmed him, before whom men trembled, and whose slightest word was law.

CHAPTER XL

AN INSULT PROMPTLY RESENTED.

LORD TRENHOLM returned on board the *Superb* in a mood that told his subordinates that something had gone decidedly wrong with his lordship.

He complained of indisposition, yet refused to see the ship's surgeon, and confined himself in his really palatial quarters, declining to see any visitors, and brooding over his lost love.

One day he was surprised by a visit from Governor Malcolm, and had he been so inclined, he could not have refused seeing so important a personage.

The Governor went in state, in his twenty-four-oared barge, and he was received on board ship with the thunders of artillery in a salute becoming his rank.

"My dear Lord Trenholm, I heard of your illness and came to see you," he said pleasantly, as he entered the sumptuously furnished cabin.

"I am glad to see you, Sir Henry Malcolm, for I wished to ask you if Lady Coraline meant all that she said to me the other day?"

"You refer to her breaking of the engagement between you, my lord?"

"I do, Sir Henry."

"She utterly refused to become your wife, my lord, and when I declined to so inform you she said that she would do so."

"I hope that she said nothing to offend your lordship?"

"She said a great deal, Sir Henry, to wound and anger me."

"I am surprised, my lord."

"No more so than was I, Sir Henry, for she even accused me of sending bribed men to England to swear that young Rossmore was implicated with the pirate Black Beard, in the seizure of the *Blue Belt*."

"Why, the girl is mad," said Sir Henry, hastily, but Lord Trenholm detected a flush come to his face which convinced him that he had feared the presence in America of Reginald Rossmore, and had something to do with the story told by the three seamen.

"She made me mad, Sir Henry, and I cannot forgive her."

"I am sorry, my lord, for I had hoped to see my darling daughter your wife."

"Can the breach not be healed, Sir Henry?" asked the nobleman, as though more than willing to bridge over the gulf if it could be done.

The Governor shook his head sadly.

"You think not?"

"I know not, my lord."

"She has spoken to you upon the subject, then?"

"She said she had severed her contract with you, my lord, and now the silly girl this very morning has bound herself to another."

"By the king! but this is news!" and Lord Trenholm was upon his feet in an instant.

"It was news to me, my lord."

"But to whom, Sir Henry, to whom?"

"I fear you will be greatly surprised when I tell you, my lord."

"I certainly am most impatient to know who has superseded me in the love of the Lady Coraline Malcolm," said Lord Trenholm, with a sneer.

"Well, my lord, I received a visit this morning from Don Sarano Sagarta and—"

The British commodore had resumed his seat, but was now upon his feet with a bound, while he almost shrieked forth:

"That man?"

"Yes, my lord, he informed me that he loved the Lady Coraline, and begged me to permit him to offer her his hand."

"And your answer, Sir Henry?"

"That I would communicate with the Lady Coraline, and then give him my reply."

"And you did so?"

"I did."

"And may I inquire the result of the interview?"

"She accepted of his attentions, my lord, with a view to becoming his wife."

"But you know nothing of the other man than his being a Cuban and possessing riches."

"He may be a reformed pirate for all you know."

Sir Henry started, and looked fixedly at Lord Trenholm, to see if the shot about the pirate was a random one, and became convinced that it was, so answered:

"Oh, yes, my lord, I know all about his family connections."

"Indeed! he is well born then?" said Lord Trenholm, with sarcasm.

"As well born as I am, Lord Trenholm," responded the Governor, with perfect truth.

"Well, I feared his fascinations upon her, and I believe it was for him, rather than because she was angry with me for sending Rossmore off, that she broke with me."

"She does seem fascinated with the man, my lord."

"Well, I wish her joy, Sir Henry, and you also in your expectant son-in-law," and shortly after the Governor arose and departed.

But he left Lord Trenholm in a fever of excitement, which was not allayed as the hours passed by.

At last the irate commodore ordered his boat to the gangway, and went ashore, his face pale, lips compressed, and eyes glittering with malice.

Straight to the *Oleander Inn* Lord Trenholm wended his way, and seemingly with some object in view.

He found, seated upon the broad veranda, enjoying their cigars, a number of the officers of his fleet and from the forts, and all saluted him politely, a courtesy he returned with no very genial manner.

Beckoning to Captain De Foe, who was among the number, he went into the "state chamber," as the landlord called his best reception room, and denoted to his guests of rank, and the two officers sat down to enjoy a bottle of "mine host's best."

"Well, De Foe, what do you think of this Cuban that the town is going wild over?" asked Lord Trenholm, who had already seen Don Sagarta at the window of the room before he entered.

Captain De Foe had not observed the pirate, as he sat in the shadow of the curtain, glancing over a book, and returned pleasantly:

"He is a very handsome man, my lord, is without doubt rich, and is the thorough gentleman in his intercourse with others."

"I believe he is an adventurer and a villain, De Foe, in spite of his courtly manners," and Lord Trenholm uttered the words in a distinct, loud voice.

Instantly a quick step was heard behind him, but the nobleman gave the lie to his words that he believed the pretended Cuban a villain, by not turning, although he knew it must be his successful rival for the hand of Lady Coraline.

That he did not turn, with a man behind him whom he had just spoken of in such vehement terms, showed wonderful nerve on the part of the British officer.

Coming from the alcove, where he had been seated, Captain De Foe was the first to see him, and said in a quick, low tone:

"Neptune's ghost!" but he is here, my lord."

"Pardon me, Commodore Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, but as I am the only Cuban in your town, and accidentally overheard your last remark, may I ask if you referred to me as a man whom you believed a villain and an adventurer?"

The question was asked in a tone that was almost sweet in its softness, and a smile, instead of a frown, was upon the face of the questioner as he addressed the nobleman.

As the voice of his rival fell on his ears, Lord Trenholm arose to his feet and faced the pretended Cuban, his face white and eyes flashing.

At the conclusion of the question addressed him, he said firmly:

"As you were eavesdropping, sir, and heard what I said, I will frankly answer you that I did refer to you as a man I believed to be an adventurer and a villain."

Hardly had the last word been spoken when Lord Trenholm received a blow from the pirate's open palm that sent him reeling upon the table by his side, and brought a cry of surprise from Captain De Foe that his superior should be so summarily punished for the insult he had given.

CHAPTER XLII

A CHALLENGE ACCEPTED.

IN the room at the time of Lord Trenholm's insulting words and the prompt punishment thereof by the one to whom they were addressed, was mine host himself, and a cry of alarm from him was sufficiently loud to bring a score of officers quickly to his side, to see what had thrown the landlord so completely off his well-balanced dignity.

They found Don Sagarta quietly seated in the alcove near the window, smoking and reading, and Lord Trenholm, white as marble upon one side of the face and scarlet on the other, from the effects of the blow, just leaving the room, and leaning upon the arm of Captain De Foe, while mine host Boniface was following them with the air of one who wished to offer consolation to the nobleman, but was glad of the opportunity to do so.

"I will have his life for it," they heard Lord Trenholm hiss forth, and those who knew their superior well were aware that he was no man to make an idle threat.

Leaving the inn together, the two officers went on board of the *Superb*, while the landlord, glad to have the chance to let his tongue loose, very tersely yet entertainingly told the story of the affair, ending with:

"I tell you, gentlemen patrons, Don Sagarta was smiling the while as sweetly as a lass at a ball, and when he gave that blow with his open hand, it rung like the crack of a horse-pistol and I know that my Lord Trenholm saw blue lights for an instant."

"Come, gentlemen, let us have a few cups of *amontillado*, which I know is pure as the old blue blood of Castile."

No one declined the invitation which it seemed to please Boniface to extend, and as the silver goblets were being filled with the rare old wine, into the tap-room walked Don Sarano Sagarta.

He bowed pleasantly to those he knew, and was passing on when the landlord cried:

"Come, Don Sagarta, I am filling the cups with some pure *amontillado*, from old Spain, and the purity of which you should know, so join us in a goblet if you will."

"With pleasure, senor."

"Your good health, senor, and yours, senors," and Don Sagarta bowed to all present as he raised the goblet to his lips.

"Is not that the real *amontillado*, Don Sagarta?" asked the landlord.

"It certainly is, and I'll wager that it never paid the king's toll when it landed in his province," answered the pretended Cuban, with a smile.

"Don Sagarta, you are right, for I bought a wreck that a pilot-boat towed in, and its hold had many casks of rare old wines;" and before mine host could go on with his story, Captain De Foe entered, and walking up to Don Sagarta, said politely, while a silence fell upon all:

"Pardon me, Don Sagarta, but I am the bearer of a verbal challenge to you from my superior officer, Commodore Lord Trenholm, to be delivered whenever I met you, and to the effect that you grant him a hostile meeting at your earliest convenience."

"With pleasure, sir," and taking out his watch, one of the ungainly and antiquated time-pieces of that age, he continued:

"I had intended driving out at four, so will drive to the spot where he may select to meet me."

The words were uttered in the coolest manner possible, and there was not the slightest change upon his handsome face.

"I will so report to my Lord Trenholm, sir," said Captain De Foe, and added:

"It is for you to select the weapons and the place."

"There is a very pretty point of land below the mansion of Sir Henry Malcolm, your Governor, and it will be convenient for me, and as to weapons, it is a matter of total indifference, sir, and which you prefer you can arrange with Lord Trenholm, for I shall have no second, not being sufficiently acquainted with any one in your town to ask such a favor," and raising his hat, Don Sagarta walked from the room and sought his own chambers, while an army officer remarked, *sotto voce*:

"I'm thinking that the British lion has caught a Cuban tiger this time."

And this seemed to be the prevailing opinion, while, so obnoxious had Lord Trenholm rendered himself to all with whom he came in contact, that many hoped that there would be a vacancy in the file of a commodore's rank, though they knew that their superior was considered the best swordsman and the truest shot in the service.

Returning to the veranda the group of officers discussed in low tones what had occurred, and it soon leaked out that Lord Trenholm had been discarded by Lady Coraline, and that the Cuban had been his successful rival.

For this gratuitous piece of news, they were indebted to mine host, who had learned it that day over a glass of wine with Kendrick, he having been told the secret by Lady Coraline's maid Martha.

Soon the eyes of all fell upon the barge of Lord Trenholm leading the side of the *Superb*, and in the stern-sheets sat the commodore, Captain De Foe, and an officer recognized as the surgeon of the flag-ship.

As the barge headed down the harbor, the servant of Don Sagarta brought his master's horse to the door, and with him an animal for himself.

A moment after Don Sagarta came out upon the veranda, a cigar between his teeth, and a long, ominous-looking bundle in his hand.

He was attired in a riding-suit, looked as unconcerned as though starting out merely for a little exercise, and tossing the bundle to his servant, leaped upon his horse from the ground and rode away at a gallop, followed by his attendant.

"Well, he is the coolest man I ever saw go to the dueling field," said one.

"He is, indeed," responded another.

"To ride there on horseback and thus excite his nerves, besides making no preparations for being wounded."

"I only wish we had been invited to see the meeting," said another.

And thus the comments went on among the group, the landlord dodging in and out, apparently most anxious about his profitable boarder, while the individual who was the subject of the conversation was riding leisurely along the road leading to the place of meeting, followed by his servant, carrying the implements of death.

CHAPTER XLII.

A HOSTILE ENCOUNTER.

As the supposed Cuban was passing the grand gateway, leading into the grounds of the Governor, Lady Coraline suddenly appeared, about to cross the highway, and go to the little arbor upon the shore of the harbor.

Instantly dismounting, Don Sagarta saluted her, and throwing his rein to his servant, asked to accompany her to the shore.

She granted his request and he walked by her side to the rustic arbor, when her eyes fell upon the barge of Lord Trenholm coming down the harbor.

Instantly she recognized her discarded lover, and said, quietly:

"My father is about to receive visitors, I see."

"No; I heard Lord Trenholm had business down the harbor this afternoon," was the quiet reply; and then turning he noted the distance to the point of land where he was to meet the officer, and said:

"And I also have a temporary engagement; but as Lady Coraline has her book with her,

as though to read here in this pleasant retreat, I hope she will permit me to rejoin her here upon my return from my ride."

"Don Sagarta will find me here," she said, quietly, and he took his departure, while those in the barge were gazing upon him with feelings of surprise that he should dally there when on his way to a meeting that was to be for life or death.

Mounting his horse, he dashed on at a lively pace, and reached the designated spot just as the barge grated upon the beach.

A moment after the trio of officers came to the rendezvous, and Captain De Foe said:

"I was in hopes that Don Sagarta would think better of it, and be accompanied by a second."

"Thank you, senior, but there was no need of my troubling any one."

"My servant has my blades and a pair of pistols, and if Lord Trenholm is not well suited mine are at his service to select from."

Upon examination the weapons of Don Sagarta were found to be of such superior quality that Lord Trenholm cast aside his own blades, willing to use one of those kindly offered to him by his foe, for swords were to be used by the combatants.

Grim and silent, Lord Trenholm took his stand, his heart full of rage, which had been by no means decreased by seeing his rival talking to Lady Coraline upon the shore.

"If I kill the Cuban," he thought, "then I can bring Lady Coraline to terms once more."

Such was his aim, and thus came out the secret of his intentional insult to his rival.

Calm and indifferent Don Sagarta took up his blade, tried its temper by bending it double almost, and then stepped briskly in front of his foe.

Lord Trenholm knew his own powers in the art of fencing but too well, and in his life he had several times run his man through, while on a number of occasions he had disarmed those who had dared to confront him.

What the Cuban was as a swordsman he had no means of judging, yet he certainly showed wonderful confidence in himself and an unflinching nerve.

With the word from Captain De Foe the blades crossed and the combat was begun.

Both Captain De Foe, the surgeon, who stood by his case of instruments, and the crew of the barge, standing a short distance away, felt that victory must fall upon their stern and skillful commander.

But they wondered at suddenly seeing Lord Trenholm give ground.

Was he purposely leading the Cuban to miscalculate his strength and skill?

So they believed, and expected that he would soon turn the tables with a vengeance upon his adversary.

But as the blades whirled in the air in the hot contest for mastery it soon became evident that Lord Trenholm was becoming a trifle nervous and losing his temper, and the reason of this was evident, for Don Sagarta was as cool as an icicle, and without doubt the master of the British commander in the use of the sword.

This fact became evident to Captain De Foe and the surgeon at the same time, both from his remarkable skill with the sword and also from the fact that they could see that Lord Trenholm was playing no part but fighting desperately against a man he had found out was his superior with a weapon which he had boasted he had no equal in the use of.

Pressed backward against a large tree, Lord Trenholm was brought to a standstill, and began to fight with desperation, trying every trick known in the art of fencing, but all to no purpose; for Don Sagarta pressed him so hard that he resorted only to defending his life, a circumstance that caused the crew of the barge and the servant of the supposed Cuban to draw nearer with renewed interest.

White with rage, savage as a wild beast, Lord Trenholm fought on—but only in self-defense—while Don Sagarta, as though tiring of what was evidently only sport to him, suddenly struck up the blade of his adversary, and getting under his guard he thrust his sword's point deep into the body of the Englishman.

Quickly withdrawing the weapon, while his foe sunk into the arms of his friends, Don Sagarta tossed it to his servant, and with a salute to Captain De Foe and the surgeon, mounted his horse and dashed away at a gallop, unknown and seemingly uncaring whether Lord Trenholm was alive or dead.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SECRET KNOWN.

LADY CORALINE still sat in the arbor, yet the book she held in her lap had been unopened, for her thoughts were far away.

She was thinking, and of the man whom she had discarded, not because she did not love him—for he held her whole heart as his own—but because she was proud of her father and of his honor, and she was willing to sacrifice herself to save him.

Upon her the pirate Black Beard, and whom she knew as such, held a strange influence.

Perhaps it was because she pitied his misfortunes and sorrows, which had led him to become what he was, and it might have been that she was charmed toward him on account of the kindred existing between them.

She believed that he loved her, and she could not but admire him, in spite of his crimes, for his indomitable courage that made him delight in facing any danger that crossed his path.

But poor Reginald Rossmore she knew had been sent to England to be tried for a crime of which she knew him to be guiltless.

Would the king listen to the hired witnesses whom her father had paid well to concoct the story against him, or would his majesty lean to the side of truth?

If the former, poor Rossmore must die, and if the latter, there was hope for him.

To save him, if in her power, she had boldly addressed a letter to the king, telling him there was a plot, born in envy, against Reginald Rossmore, and begging his majesty not to condemn him without just cause and a full hearing. She exonerated Lord Trenholm in the matter by saying that he was acting from a sense of duty, and with a desire to see an officer who lost his vessel, as had young Rossmore, punished.

To this letter she daringly wrote her father's name and affixed the seal of the province, after having consigned to the flames the official document written by the Governor and urging the guilt of the prisoner.

Of this Lady Coraline was thinking, and hoping that her plot would turn out well, when the clatter of hoofs aroused her, and up dashed Don Sagarta.

He dismounted quickly, threw his bridle-rein over the limb of a tree, and, advancing to her side, took the seat to which she motioned him upon the rustic settee.

She asked him how he had enjoyed the ride, and he answered:

"Fully as much as I anticipated, Senorita Coraline," and then he led the conversation into various channels, until presently the barge came in sight, returning to the ship.

Upon the flag-staff in the stern the little ensign was flying at half-mast, and this circumstance at once caught the eye of Lady Coraline, who quickly pointed it out to her companion, who coolly replied:

"Yes, and the oarsmen pull with the long, slow stroke of a funeral cortege, Lady Coraline."

Nearer came the barge, and much closer inshore than when it went down, and upon a seat in the stern was a form lying prostrate and covered with a heavy cloak.

That alone told the story of a death of one who had gone down the harbor in the boat, and Lady Coraline glanced quickly at those in the stern sheets to note who was the missing one.

Captain De Foe, the surgeon, the midshipman, the coxswain, the twelve oarsmen were there, but "where is Lord Trenholm?" she asked.

"Lying beneath that cloak, Lady Coraline, without a doubt."

"Dead?" she said, in a tone of horror.

"Certainly, or why beneath that pall?"

"You know something of this, sir?" she said, sternly.

"Yes, Lady Coraline."

"Speak, Sir Pirate, and tell me what yonder sight means," and she pointed to the barge, now but a short distance away.

"Ha! you know me?" and he faced her with blazing eyes.

"Yes, as Black Beard I know you," she said, calmly.

"Yes, Lady Coraline, I am Black Beard, the Buccaneer, and in yonder barge lies the form of your lover, Lord Trenholm, whom I killed a few moments ago in a duel."

He pointed, as he spoke, to the barge, and faced her, calm and fearless, though he knew that his secret was known to her who had promised to be his wife.

"And you killed him?" she said in a low tone.

"Yes."

"Oh, Robert Tichborne, do you even now thirst for blood, when I believed that you had reformed?" she cried.

"He sought the meeting, for he insulted me publicly, and he hoped to remove a rival for your hand from his path, and—*failed*."

"But you call me Robert Tichborne?"

"Yes, for that is your name."

"True, yet I deemed not that you knew me as such, though at times I have feared that you would recognize in me Black Beard, as you seem to look into one's soul with those sweet eyes of yours, Lady Coraline."

"I know all, Robert Tichborne, for I heard what passed between you and my father the night of your first visit to our home."

"Then he did not betray me?"

"No."

"And you know me as I was and as I am?"

"I do."

"That I am your cousin?"

"Yes, my bitterly wronged cousin."

"Well, my sweet cousin, and what is your verdict?" he asked, in a low tone.

"That I feel for you, I pity you, and to atone for the wrong that my father has done you, I am willing, with one promise from you, to become your wife."

"And that promise?"

"To become a reformed man, as I believe and hope you are."

"If I can?"

"I will be a true wife to you."

"If I break that promise?"

"Beware of me then," she said, almost savagely.

"I promise all you ask."

"Now, for the present, farewell."

He turned away, mounted his horse and rode at a gallop back to the Oleander Inn, overtaking his servant on the way.

As he dismounted before the door, old Bonifacio, unable to suppress his curiosity, said, while every neck was craned to hear.

"Pardon, Don Sagarta."

"We l, senor?" and the pirate paused.

"We are all so deeply interested, senor; but was there a meeting between you and Lord Trenholm?"

"Yes, senor."

"And, senor," persisted the landlord, "what was the result?"

Don Sagarta, as I will continue to call him for the present, pointed down the harbor, to where the returning barge was just visible, while he said:

"Do you see that barge, senor?"

"Yes, Don Sagarta."

"Look well, and you will see that the flag is at half mast," and without another word he passed on to his rooms, while every man who heard what he said sprung to his feet in dumb amazement.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SACRIFICED.

Governor Malcolm was not the only one startled by the news of the fatal duel between Lord Trenholm St. Ledger and Don Sagarta, for the town was in an uproar about the affair.

The overbearing and arrogant naval officer had won as many enemies as had the courteous Cuban gained friends, and popular opinion sided with the latter, and few sympathized with the dead.

The officers of the fleet had, of course, to wear sad countenances and speak in whispered tones of the virtues of the dead, whatever they might feel in their heart, and howsoever hard it might be to recall the said virtues of the late commodore.

The Governor had gone to his plantation after leaving Lord Trenholm on board the *Superb*, and a courier had ridden post-haste after him to make the news known.

Returning to the town, he had at once repaired on board the *Superb*, and gazed upon the features of his slain friend.

Then had the artillery thundered forth minute guns in honor of the fallen chief, and all through the long night had the deep tones echoed through the town.

As many of the officers were boarding at the Oleander Inn during their stay in port, although there was a deserted air outside, within doors there was considerable bustle as evening came on.

But suddenly in the crowded room a hush fell upon all, as in walked Don Sagarta:

His smile was just as winning, his manner just as polite, as he walked to his table and sat down to supper.

Each minute a deep mouthed gun pealed forth its note of woe from on board the *Superb*, but Don Sagarta did not seem to hear them, or hearing, as he certainly did, he was not in the least disturbed thereby.

His supper was called for and partaken of with evident relish, he sent a bottle of wine back as inferior to the brand he had ordered, and after supper lighted his cigar and puffed away with the air of a man who had no care upon him.

As it would be bad taste, for the naval officers who had met him, to be seen talking with him then, they held aloof, but several prominent citizens strolled into the inn and joined the Don at his table, until he at last retired to his rooms for the night.

The following day the fleet got under way, the *Superb* leading, and sailing out into the offing, the body of Lord Trenholm was consigned to the deep, in obedience to his own request ere he breathed his last.

Back to their anchorage came the English cruisers, Captain Barney Craig was installed as fleet commander, and with the shades of night gathering over the town, the Oleander became a scene of revel.

But Don Sarano Sagarta was absent, and Bonifacio hinted that he had gone to take tea with the Governor and his lovely daughter.

It was late when Don Sagarta returned to the Oleander that night, and in a short while after the town had another sensation.

That sensation was the news flying about that the beautiful Lady Coraline Malcolm was to become the wife of Don Sagarta the Cuban planter, and at an early day too.

Those fair maids of the community who would have been glad to have entrapped the pretended Cuban upon any terms, thought it shameful for the Lady Coraline to become the wife of one man, before her discarded lover, Lord Trenholm, was hardly cold in his deep-sea grave.

But the Lady Coraline heard not what the gossips said, nor would she have cared if she had, and consequently went on with her preparations for the wedding, which was arranged for an early day.

The weeks rolled by and at last the gala time came round, and the *elite* of the town, the navy and the army were there, for the Governor would have it a grand occasion, and the knot of wedlock was irrevocably tied, that bound Lady Coraline to the man whom her father and herself alone knew, of all there present, in his true character as a pirate.

Many present spoke of the proud, triumphant face of the groom, of the anxious look of the Governor, and the pale, haggard countenance of the bride; but none dreamed that Coraline Malcolm had sacrificed herself to save her father from the gallows.

Yet so it was, for she had made a grave in her heart of her love for Reginald Rossmore, and with pride in her name, and deepest affection for her father, she had determined to sacrifice herself rather than the cruel secrets which Robert Tichborne could tell, should come out and all be known.

She believed that her cousin, who had gone wrong, really loved her, and she hoped that she might wholly reform him.

Could she do this then, she felt that she had not made the sacrifice in vain.

It was the intention of the pretended Cuban to sail with his bride to his Cuban home, the elegant abode which he had won from the unfortunate gambler planter, and consequently his *carrera* had been gotten in readiness to sail, and was to spread her white wings and fly southward, as soon as the merry company were ready to depart from the gubernatorial mansion, when all would go to the shore and wait the wedded pair a *bon voyage*.

But, just as all was in readiness, and farewells were being spoken, there came a guest to the mansion who had not been expected, and whose coming was followed by a scene of terror and confusion.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE SEVERED CHAINS.

The vessel, in which Reginald Rossmore had been sent a prisoner in irons to England had not dropped the land a hundred miles astern when the first misfortune of the cruise befell her, in the falling from her rigging upon the deck of one of her seamen.

The poor fellow had hardly been consigned to his grave in the sea, when a fire broke out on board, and was only subdued after a hard fight for life.

Next followed the death from disease of the second-luff, and the sailors began to shake their heads ominously and whisper that there was a "Jonah on board."

Who that Jonah was the superstitious crew were determined to find out.

One thing after another, adversities fell upon the ill-fated ship, until hardly a day passed that some accident did not occur, and at last the men arose in mutiny.

Their captain they did not like, and twice it was said, on a former cruise, that he had killed ruthlessly one of his crew, and that misfortune dogged his wake upon every voyage he made.

Once a body of seamen got an idea into their heads to carry out a certain plan, good or bad, they are not long in doing it, and the whisper arose to hurl the captain into the sea, and then allow the other officers to continue in charge of the vessel, if they would swear to report their commander as "lost overboard" when they arrived in port.

Should they refuse, then they must follow their captain, and the brig should be placed in command of the prisoner below decks, Reginald Rossmore.

All on board liked the young officer, who was being sent in irons to England, and they felt that the charges against him, sent by one so all-powerful as Lord Trenholm St. Ledger, would allow him no chance for his life, and they wished to set him free.

Having formed their plot, the men suddenly seized their officers, though not until after a hot fight in which the captain was sorely wounded, and they were marching aft in a body to the quarter deck, to carry their intention of ending the life of their commander then and there, when a form suddenly darted half-way up the companionway.

It was Reginald Rossmore, pale, determined, and with his chains hanging from right wrist and left ankle.

In one hand he held a wax taper lighted, and in ringing tones he cried:

"Hold! men, what means this mutiny?"

All started at sight of him, for they knew not how he had gotten free from the ringleader to which he had been ironed.

"It means, lieutenant, that the cap'n is the Jonah of this craft, and we intend to toss him into the sea," said the ringleader loudly.

"You will do no such thing, my men," was the bold reply.

"We intend to, and we'll make you cap'n, sir, toss all into the sea as won't jine us, and turn ther craft into a pirate," was the bold response; while another cried out:

"That's the talk; for the black flag will pay us more than we earn under the king."

A yell of apparent satisfaction broke from all at these words, while the imprisoned officers turned deadly pale.

But Reginald Rossmore calmly replied, and in tones so distinct and resolute that all knew he meant just what he said:

"Lads, you are making fools of yourselves, and your own hands are tying the noose about your necks to hang you."

"I knew there was some devil's work going on, and managed to wrench my irons loose, and I tell you that from the magazine to my feet is laid a train of powder, into which I will thrust this taper, if you do not release these officers at once and go forward!"

Every man was dumb with amazement and terror, and a deathlike silence fell upon all for full a minute.

"Will you go, lads?" asked Reginald Rossmore, kindly.

"Do you mean to blow the craft up, with all on board, sir, if we refuse?" asked one.

"I most certainly do, my men."

"Go forward at once to your duties, and I will promise, in your captain's name, that this affair shall end here, and no punishment follow."

The men consulted together an instant, and then one said:

"We'll go forward, sir, if the captain lets you take command, the other officers doing duty as before."

"I am a prisoner, my men."

"I accept their offer, Lieutenant Rossmore, and will turn the vessel over to your command until she arrives in port, and then you must surrender yourself to me as my prisoner once more," said the captain.

"As you please, sir; but I do not seek this," said Reginald.

"True, but it is better so, as I have feared trouble with my crew, and under you the men will behave themselves."

"Then they must give their pledge that this mutinous spirit ends here."

"Do you so pledge yourselves, lads?" asked Reginald.

A cheer was the answer, and the officers being set free, the vessel once more continued on her way, and the prisoner had become her commander, his own bold act having severed the chains that bound him.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE KING'S COMMAND.

IN due time the vessel entered the Thames, and dropped anchor just below the gloomy Tower of London.

True to their pledge the crew had remained steadfast, and Reginald Rossmore had carried the craft into port without another accident occurring on board, and he had won the renewed good-will of the men, and added to the respect felt for him by the officers over whom he had been so strangely placed.

Upon the letting fall of the anchor in the Thames Reginald Rossmore reported himself at once to the captain as his prisoner, and though regretting to have to do so, the commander of the vessel placed him once more in irons, while he, having nearly recovered from his wound, went ashore to make known his arrival, and deliver the dispatches he had brought.

The nature of these gained for him an audience with the king, and he was closely questioned in regard to all he knew of affairs in the Carolinas, and he told a plain, unvarnished story of the tyranny of Lord Trenholm toward all, and the rumor regarding his treatment of Reginald Rossmore arising from jealousy.

A blunt seaman, cruel though he was, and a hard master, he confessed that he had treated his crew himself with unusual severity, and that he owed it to the prisoner he had brought over that his vessel had not been seized, himself and officers murdered, and the craft turned into a pirate.

He ended by asking clemency of his majesty for Reginald Rossmore and for his crew also, and was told that an audience would be granted to the young lieutenant.

With considerable doubt as to what his reception would be, Reginald Rossmore entered the presence of his king the following day.

His majesty gazed fixedly into the face of his officer an instant and then handing him an open dispatch, said:

"This official paper comes to me regarding yourself."

"Yes, sire."

"Read it!"

Reginald did so, and found it the charges made against him by Lord Trenholm.

"This paper came to me from his Excellency, Sir Henry Malcolm," and he handed to Reginald a second official document with the seal broken.

"Yes, sire."

"Read it!"

The young officer obeyed, but a strange look crossed his face as he did so.

"What have you to say in regard to them?" asked the king.

"I can only say, your majesty, that I did disobey the orders of Lord Trenholm in not giving the lady into his charge; but her life demanded that I should seek aid for her at once, and I did so."

"But the letter of Sir Henry does not carry out the statement of Lord Trenholm that it would do so?"

"No, sire."

"What have you to say about that?"

"Frankly, your majesty, I am convinced that Sir Henry never wrote the paper sent you there," and the young officer flushed crimson.

"You have an idea who did so?"

"I have, your majesty."

"Sir Henry's name is signed to it."

"True, sire."

"But you think another forged it?"

"I think Sir Henry did not write the letter, your majesty, for it is friendly to me, and he was not."

"Do you recognize this writing?"

Again the young officer's face flushed as he took into his hands an unofficial letter.

"I do, your majesty," he said, in a hesitating tone.

Reginald read as follows:

"May one who knows of the plot to destroy Lieutenant Reginald Rossmore inform your majesty that Lord Trenholm St. Ledger prefers charges against him because he finds in him a dangerous rival for the hand of a lady whose life the lieutenant and not the titled commodore was so fortunate as to save."

"Should your majesty, in your well-known fairness, investigate the charges made, your highness will find that the truth only has been written by your majesty's devoted

SUBJECT."

"Well, you recognize this handwriting as the one who wrote the alleged letter from Sir Henry Malcolm?" asked the king.

"I do, your highness."

"And who wrote the two?"

"I sincerely hope your majesty will pardon me if I refuse to answer," was the bold reply.

Instead of being angry the king smiled, and said:

"You need not reply, for my secretary has recognized the writing as that of Lady Coraline Malcolm, whose life it was you saved."

"Now to the charge that you sold my schooner-of-war, which I placed you in command of, to Black Beard the Buccaneer."

The face of Reginald Rossmore now flushed with anger, while he answered:

"It is false, your highness, utterly false."

"I lost the Blue Belt, but it was from a well-laid plot that I believe no officer, situated as I was, could prevent and I am ready to accept what punishment your majesty is pleased to visit upon me."

"Then, Captain Reginald Rossmore, for that is now your rank, to which I promote you for saving my vessel and her officers from her mutineer crew, my orders are that you return to the craft which you brought safely into port, and taking command of the seamen on board, repair with them to the schooner-of-war, just completed and fitted for sea, and lying at the admiralty's dock."

"Your majesty!" gasped Reginald Rossmore, in delighted surprise.

"The vessel was built as a sister craft to the Blue Belt, and is her equal in every way, and she has been named the Red Belt, and her duty will be to cruise the seas upon a roving commission to hunt down this noted outlaw, Black Beard, the Buccaneer."

"You have your orders, Captain Rossmore, your vessel awaits you, and I hope the morning will find you at sea."

With a heart overflowing with emotion, Reginald Rossmore poured forth his thanks to his king, pledged his word to hunt Black Beard to death, and the morning did find him at sea, and the commander of a vessel the superior, if anything, of the Blue Belt, and with a crew of seventy-five gallant tars upon her decks.

CHAPTER XLVII.

TOO LATE.

THE person who put in an appearance at the wedding of Don Sagarta and Lady Coraline, and whose coming seemed to create confusion upon all sides, was a young and handsome man, attired in the handsome uniform of a captain in the British navy.

The guests were just assembling to conduct the groom and his bride to the landing, where the *carrera's* boat was waiting, when the British officer suddenly presented himself before them.

A cry of commingled alarm and pain broke from the lips of Lady Coraline as her eyes fell upon the pale, stern face of the one who confronted her and her pirate husband, while there came in hoarse tones from Governor Malcolm:

"Reginald Rossmore!"

"Yes, Sir Henry Malcolm, I am Reginald Rossmore, a captain in his majesty's navy, and the bearer of important dispatches to you from the king," was the calm reply of the young officer.

"Why, sir, you were sent to England in irons, to be tried for your life, as engaged in a conspiracy," said the Governor, in haughty tones.

"True, sir, and my noble king discovering that I was the victim of a conspiracy, pardoned my losing his schooner, the Blue Belt, promoted me, and placing me in command of the Red Belt, the sister craft of the vessel taken from me by Black Beard, the Buccaneer, and ordered me upon a special service after having delivered into your hands certain papers of which I am the bearer."

All heard his words in silence, while the cunning Governor, feeling that Reginald Rossmore was indeed a favorite with the king, and that

it would be best to keep upon the good side of him at once said:

"My dear Captain Rossmore, allow me to congratulate you upon your promotion, and permit me to ask you to join us in drinking a long life and happiness to my daughter, who has just been wedded to Don Sarano Sagarta of Cuba."

"Sir Henry Malcolm," and the voice of the young officer trembled, while he became livid as he spoke:

"I heard that there was a wedding being held within your mansion, and supposed that you were giving your daughter to Lord Trenholm St. Ledger; but you tell me she has married Don Sarano Sagarta of Cuba."

"So I said, sir."

"And I say, Governor Malcolm, that he is not a Cuban, but none other than Black Beard, the Buccaneer!"

At these words a wild shout arose upon all sides, above which echoed the cry of poor Lady Coraline, who now felt that all was lost, that her sacrifice had been in vain.

Reeling, she would have fallen, but for the strong arm of the man she had just wedded.

Springing forward he grasped her with one arm, while with his disengaged hand he drew a pistol from his breast, and leveling it cried in trumpet tones:

"Take that for your words against me, young sir!"

With his words the pistol rung out, and Reginald Rossmore sunk in his tracks.

In the mad scene of confusion that followed, Black Beard raised his bride in his arms, and drawing his sword cut his way through the crowd, few daring to oppose him.

Reaching the lawn he was opposed by the soldier on duty, to whom some one called out:

"Stop that man!"

"He is Black Beard, the Buccaneer!"

But there came another report, of a second weapon quickly drawn by the bold outlaw, and the guard measured his length upon the ground.

Like a deer then he sped along toward the water's edge, while behind him fierce and loud were heard the voices of his pursuers.

"Ho, men! to my aid here, and keep back these hounds!"

The cry of the pirate brought the crew of his waiting boat toward him, and at his command a volley was fired upon the pursuing crowd, while he cried savagely:

"Take that as a souvenir of Black Beard, you hounds!"

Wild shrieks and groans followed, and the next instant the pirate chief was in his boat, urging the crew to pull with all speed to the *carrera*, which lay a short distance off-shore.

The alarm was spread, scores of naval officers had attended the wedding, and hastened up to the town, and off to their vessels with all dispatch.

But, when the first vessel of war, the *Surf Bird* got under way, the lateen-rigged craft of the bold pirate was flying out to sea, far beyond the reach of the longest range guns of the forts.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BLACK BEARD'S BRIDE.

HAD Lady Coraline been herself, or that is not so utterly dazed by the appearance of her lover, and his denouncement of the pirate, she would have struggled hard to free herself from the grasp of the man whose wife she had become, after discovering that the secret of who he really was had become known.

But she was rendered wholly incapable of action, though she saw the fall of her lover, before the shot of her husband, the flight, the coming of the boat's crew to their leader's aid, and the volley that brought down others of her friends, and perhaps her father.

Then she swooned in earnest, and when she came to consciousness, she found herself in the cabin of the *carrera*, which she knew was at sea, from the motion, and that she was under the pressure of a great deal of canvas her lying far over upon her side was proof of.

At first regaining her consciousness, she sprang to her feet and her hand grasped a sword that lay upon the table near her.

Shortening the blade, she pressed the point over her heart, and seemed about to take her own life, and thus end her sorrows.

But suddenly some thought flashed through her brain, and she threw the sword from her; while from her lips came the words:

"Not yet!"

Hardly had the weapon fallen upon the carpeted floor, when springing forward she again seized it, and this time grasping the hilt, started toward the companionway, her eyes flashing with some suddenly formed resolve.

But, with her foot upon the first step, she paused, shook her head slowly, and again came the words:

"Not yet! not yet!"

Again was the sword thrown aside, and then she threw herself into a chair and became lost in thought.

The *carrera* careened greatly to the pressure of the strong breeze, but she seemed oblivious of it.

Then a heavy wave would fall upon the deck, staggering the little craft from stem to stern, yet Lady Coraline moved not, and her eyes became fixed in a stare of intensest thought.

Above her head she heard the tramp of feet, the stern orders now and then of her pirate husband, yet not a motion or expression proved that they reached her ears.

Thus an hour passed, the beautiful woman, in her wedding dress, seated in the cabin, her eyes fixed upon her luggage, which had been sent on board in the afternoon, and her whole air that of one who was plotting some bold act, and suffering and sorrowing while she plotted.

At last she sprung to her feet, her face wearing a strange look, and she muttered in a low, earnest tone:

"I have formed my resolve, and I will carry it out, be the cost what it may."

Instantly she turned to her luggage, and opening a chest took out a dress more suitable for the deck of a vessel than wedding attire, and also a heavy cloak.

Entering her state-room, for her father and herself had dined on board the *carrera* the day before, and she had been shown what were to be her quarters, she soon reappeared robed in more suitable costume, and with her cloak wrapped about her slender form went on deck.

She found Black Beard standing by the side of the helmsman, and narrowly watching every movement of the craft.

It was very dark, a few clouds skurried across the skies, and the wind was blowing hard.

The huge lateen sails of the *carrera* sent her driving through the rough waters at a terrific pace, and no light was visible on board.

At sight of his beautiful bride Black Beard started, sprung toward her, and grasped her hand, which she held forth to him.

"Ah! my sweet Coraline, you do not blame me then for fighting to carry you off with me?" he said, as he felt the grasp of her small hand upon his arm.

"No indeed, Robert, for do I not belong to you?" she answered softly.

"Indeed you do, and forever, for you know me as a pirate, and henceforth I shall live for you."

"Yes, I knew all that you were: but did you kill Lieutenant Rossmore, do you think?" she asked, with seeming indifference.

"Certainly, for I aimed straight between his eyes, and he fell like a log."

"He was an old lover of yours it is said?"

"Yes, he was one who sought my hand, but without title or wealth, of course my father would not accept him as a suitor for my hand."

"And how about my wife?" asked Black Beard playfully.

"I feel kindly toward him, for he saved my life, you know."

"But tell me, did you not fire upon those who pursued us, as you retreated?"

"Yes, I ordered my boat's crew to do, so for I had told them to go armed ashore."

"Several fell at the fire?"

"Yes, several were killed, and more wounded, as well as I could tell."

"Was my father among the pursuers?" she asked quietly.

"To be frank with you, Coraline, he was; but he was forced to pretend to follow us to protect himself and his secret."

"Was he hurt?"

"I think he was hit, though not seriously, for I saw him press one arm upon the other, after the volley."

"His servant was next to him with a lantern and sprung to his side."

"But he he living or dead, Coraline my beautiful, you have me now as your protector, lover, and husband."

Again she pressed his arm, and glancing astern, asked:

"Did any of the vessels of war give chase?"

"Yes, all of them; but we have even dropped their lights out of sight, so have no fear."

"And will you go directly to your home, our home, in Cuba, Robert?"

"No, for I must run to a rendezvous near Beaufort for my schooner, which is hiding there."

"As soon as I have found her, we will sail for Cuba, and then we will be most happy."

"But come, let us go into the cabin and have a glass of wine and refreshments, after which you must seek rest, for you need it, Coraline."

He led her to the cosy little cabin, a servant brought refreshments and wine, and the two sat down at the table, the bride apparently contented with her strange lot.

Pouring out a goblet of wine for each of them, she handed one to him, and taking the other herself, she said, with a charming smile:

"To our cruise, my husband!"

He drained the goblet, and then began to chat pleasantly; but soon his teeth chattered fearfully, and he tried to rise to his feet, but sunk back into his chair.

Quickly she sprung to her feet, and in low, fierce tones cried:

"Robert Tiel borne, to save my father and the honor of our name I sacrificed myself, but when to-night you shot down the one man in this world that I loved, Reginald Rossmore, then you made me a tigress, and I swore to kill you in revenge."

"I also saw my father fall before the fire of your men, and he, too, may be dead, so in placing poison in that cup, and seeing you die here before my eyes, I have avenged him also, and end the career of the sea-fiend, Black Beard, the Buccaneer!"

He had not moved as she uttered these words, but gazed fixedly into her face.

Then he burst forth into a rude laugh, and said musingly:

"You have been overmatched, my beautiful bride, for this goblet has a false bottom to it, and by touching this spring I let the contents down into the stem, and did not drink your poison."

"But your intention to kill me was good, and for it I shall punish you until I bring you begging to my feet, for that act of yours has turned my love for you to hate."

"Ho on deck!"

There came in answer two seamen.

"Bring manacles here and place them on the slender wrists and ankles of my beautiful bride."

"Then bear her to the prison den and chain her there!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the ready seamen, for they well knew their master, and were fit tools to serve him.

As for poor Coraline, she was spellbound, and sat motionless.

Her plot had failed, and instead of reaping revenge upon the one who had shot down her lover and father, she was to be treated by him as the veriest wretch on board his vessel.

She had no power to move, and when she saw the two seamen re-enter the cabin and advance toward her she swooned away, her head drooping upon the table.

It was long before she returned to consciousness, and when she did so she found that the cruel orders of Black Beard had been carried out fully by his hirelings, for irons were upon her hands and feet, and she was chained to the floor.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE VAMPIRE OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS.

NEARLY a year has gone by since the flight of Black Beard and his beautiful but unfortunate bride, the Lady Coraline, and in that time the famous pirate has made a name for himself that stands to-day in the history of buccaneering times as second to no free rover of the seas for brutality, cruelty and desperate daring.

Securing his schooner, or rather the one he had so cleverly taken from Reginald Rossmore, he began to sail the Atlantic coast, from the Chesapeake to the Gulf, and upon each cruise on sea and along the shores his fearful hand would mercilessly fall.

Seemingly maddened by his past wrongs, which had made him what he was, and frenzied by the knowledge that Lady Coraline had

attempted his life, he became a tiger in his nature, and he struck blows whenever and wherever it was in his power.

The richly-freighted ship, the humble coaster, the fisherman, the pilot-boat, all were his prey, and often would he dash into some hamlet by the sea and unprotected port, pillaging, killing, and showing no mercy to old, young or sex, and thereby making for himself a name at which even the bravest seamen would tremble.

Now and then, when pressed by small cruisers, he would turn upon them and beat them off, or put them to flight, for fear he and his terrible boarders would gain and carry their decks.

Occasionally he had been brought to bay by a large sea-warrior, and his desperate courage, great skill and daring, and masterly management of his vessel would save him.

Of course, there were many vessels upon his track, anxious to capture the noted Vampire of the Southern Seas, as he was called; but these were all of them crafts able to cope with him without any doubt as to results, with one exception, and that one was the Red Belt, the sister schooner of the pirate craft.

Who was her commander no one seemed to know, but day and night she was searching for the Blue Belt, and month after month a strange fatality seemed to keep the two beautiful vessels apart.

One afternoon, just one year after the flight of the *carrera*, with Black Beard and his bride on board, a large schooner ran into the port of Charleston and dropped anchor off the Oleander Inn.

It was evidently a craft from some of the northern ports, and her weather beaten appearance showed that she must have put into port for repairs.

Her skipper soon came ashore, sought a ship-chandler's for certain needed articles for his vessel, and then went to the Oleander and called for supper.

He was a rough-looking man, heavily built, and with white hair and beard, and in his seagottery seemed a little out of place among the gentry who frequented the Oleander.

But he had gold to pay for what he ordered, was unobtrusive in manner, and mine host furnished him with the very sumptuous repast which he had called for.

At a table near him sat Captain Frank De Foe, of the *Surf Bird*, and a brother-officer or two, enjoying a meal set before them, and the skipper of the coasting schooner looked up at the party as a soldier entered with a note for one of the gentlemen.

"It is a request from Major Saunders that I visit the fort to-night upon an important affair, and he has sent his boat for me, and begs that I remain all night," explained Captain De Foe.

"You will go, of course, sir?" asked an officer.

"I will certainly go, as he promised to let me have the first news he gained of that Vampire of the Sea, Black Beard, and he hints that a coasting skipper has given him important information."

"Good night!" and Captain De Foe walked out into the gathering gloom of the coming night, the soldier acting as his guide.

A small boat was in waiting at the landing, and it contained a coxswain and four crewmen, and taking his seat in the stern-sheets, the naval officer was rowed rapidly down the harbor toward the fort.

Not a mile had been gone over, when suddenly the officer found himself in the grip of the coxswain and his soldier guide, while two of the crewmen arising to their aid, he was instantly most securely gagged and bound before he could utter a cry of alarm or offer resistance.

Back up the harbor the boat was then turned, and soon after ran alongside of the coasting schooner, on board of which Captain De Foe was bodily lifted and carried into the cabin.

To his surprise, he saw seated there the very skipper he had noticed eating his supper in the Oleander Inn.

"We have him, captain," said one of the kidnapers of the naval officer.

"So I see."

"Put him in irons until the morning, and then report to me when you see the pilot sloop go up the harbor," was the quiet response.

The man obeyed by leaving the cabin with his prisoner, who in vain tried to speak to the skipper.

Some time after, the same seaman re-entered and said:

"The pilot sloop is coming up the harbor now, captain."

To the deck the skipper went, and his eyes fell upon a small vessel under full sail heading toward the anchorage of several vessels-of-war, the only cruisers then in port, and the largest of which was the Surf Bird, whose commander then lay in irons upon the schooner.

Hardly ten minutes passed after the pilot sloop had run alongside the Surf Bird, before battle lanterns were seen flashing in the darkness upon first one and then another vessel, and soon after the cruisers, one by one, spread their sails and stood down the harbor.

"A little gold has made that pilot do his work well."

"Now there is not a cruiser in port, and for the forts I do not care."

"Come, sunrise, and light up this harbor so I can see to do the work I have in hand."

So said the skipper as he paced to and fro, evidently in deep thought.

At length he paused by the companionway, and again said:

"Yes, my plot to kidnap my old foe has worked well, the cruisers have been sent on a wild-goose chase, and I will strike a blow here that will make these people long remember Black Beard, the Vampire of the Southern Seas."

"Come, Talbot, get the cannon out of the hold, and put all in readiness for action, for I fire my first gun at sunrise, and my target shall be the mansion of his excellency, Sir Henry Malcolm," and the pirate chief, for such he was, as his words betrayed, gave vent to a burst of mocking laughter.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO SCHOONERS.

WHEN the morning broke upon the town of Charleston, the early risers were surprised, to see anchored in the same place where had been the large coasting schooner, an armed vessel, and a stranger.

No, not a stranger, for the craft had won a name that spread terror to all who gazed upon her, and sent them flying back to safer quarters than the streets promised to be.

The mark about this vessel, by which she was recognized, was the flag at her peak.

It was a black flag, with a huge red vampire in its center.

In the upper corners were two white skulls embroidered, and in the lower the crossed bones, and, altogether forming a most hideous emblem of piracy.

The guns of the schooner were run out, and the men stood at quarters, and, with no cruiser in port, it was evident that an attack upon the merchant vessels at anchor, or perhaps upon the town was intended.

Quickly the alarm was sounded, and all was at once a scene of wild alarm and confusion.

But the schooner lay quiet at anchor while her crew leisurely set sail.

At last upon deck appeared a tall man, with a long, flowing black beard.

He was dressed in a black uniform, and cast his eyes over the town and harbor.

Soon after two seamen appeared, and between them was a slender form, clad in white.

It was a woman, and she was heavily ironed.

To the mast she was chained, and a moment after two more seamen came aft with a prisoner in their rude clutch.

At a glance, those who were gazing from the windows of the Oleander recognized the two prisoners.

One was the unfortunate bride of Black Beard, poor Lady Coraline Malcolm.

Her face was white and haggard, and her form was bent with the weight of the iron manacles she wore.

The other was captain Frank De Foe, of the Surf Bird.

"Lead him beneath that noose!" ordered Black Beard in stentorian tones.

The order was obeyed, the officer being placed beneath a rope rigged aloft, and the noose at the end, was placed about his neck.

"Frank De Foe, long years ago you made a charge against me that was false."

"That was the commencement of my downfall, and for making me all that I am, I hold you and your accursed brother responsible."

"He is dead, and now you shall follow him."

"Hold! do not beg me for mercy, for I am Robert Tichborne," shouted the pirate in ringing tones.

Then he waved his sword, and up into the air was dragged the British officer, while a yell of horror went up from those on shore, and on the decks of the unarmed vessels in the harbor.

After watching the struggles of his victim for an instant, Black Beard turned to Lady Coraline and continued:

"Now, fair lady, I will run down and lay your father's mansion in ashes, and then hang him in yonder rigging to keep De Foe company, after which I shall turn my guns upon the town, and rob and burn every vessel in the harbor."

"Up with that anchor, lads!"

In trumpet tones the voice of the hate-crazed pirate rung out, and his crew sprung to their work.

"Sail ho!"

The loud cry of warning caused all to start in alarm, and Black Beard quickly hailed the one who had uttered the words.

"Whereaway, you devil?"

The man pointed up the harbor where, just gliding out from among some coasting vessels anchored there, was a large schooner.

That she was armed was evident, and her decks were crowded with men.

Straight toward the pirate the strange schooner came, and ere the anchor of the latter had left the bottom, her enemy veered away and poured into her a broadside with telling effect.

Half a score of men went down under the iron hail, and the decks were torn and splintered, while one gun was dismounted.

"Up with that anchor, you lazy devils!" yelled Black Beard, and hardly had the words left his lips before another broadside came tearing through his bulwarks.

This badly crippled the pirate vessel; but her anchor had now left the bottom, and she forged ahead under the five-knot breeze that was blowing, and luffing, sent a broadside into her foe.

But it was not well aimed, and did little damage, while the cruiser gave her another taste of her metal with more effect than before.

"By Heaven! we will be knocked to pieces at this rate."

"Put her head on for the cruiser!"

"Boarders ho!"

The voice of Black Beard was heard above the confusion, and he sprung to the wheel himself, just as in loud tones came from on board the stranger:

"Ready again with that port broadside—No! hold! on your lives, hold!"

The last words were fairly shrieked out, and the one who uttered them sprung upon the bulwarks and gave a searching glance at the pirate's deck. As if satisfied with his gaze, he shouted:

"Ho, lads! leave those guns and take your cutlasses."

"Boarders ahoy! ahoy!"

About him, with wild cheers crowded his crew, and a moment after the two schooners came together with a crash.

Then followed wild yells, and clashing of steel, and pirates and honest tars fought for life and death.

Led by their leader the cruiser's men cut their way through the pirate's ranks, and at last Black Beard met his foe.

"Ho! I deemed you dead, Reginald Rossmore."

"But there shall be no mistake this time," shouted the pirate.

"No, I lived to kill you, accursed human vampire that you are," returned the young officer, and he crossed the blade of the pirate.

Instantly most savage became the combat; but superb swordsman that Black Beard was he had met his match in Reginald Rossmore, as he had met his fate, and five minutes after boarding the Blue Belt, the young officer had his foot upon the breast of his foe, while two seamen placed a rope about his neck.

"Up with him!"

And up into the rigging was drawn the form of the fiend in human shape, while, as he hung there, his men were crying for quarter, but uselessly, for all were cut down by the gallant crew that followed Reginald Rossmore from the deck of the Red Belt, which had so long sought the pirate craft.

CONCLUSION.

In the wan face and emaciated form of the woman chained to the mast of the Blue Belt, Reginald Rossmore recognized poor Coraline, the bride of the buccaneer.

Quickly were the irons knocked off, and hastily her lover bore her to the shore and to her old home.

But her father greeted her not, for a shot from the guns of the Blue Belt had entered the mansion and killed him alone, though he was surrounded by many of the citizens at the time, who had come to urge him to lead them against the hated pirate, should he land to attack the town.

To her own room was Lady Coraline taken, and left with faithful nurses, while Reginald Rossmore returned to his vessel to gather up the fruits of his victory.

And for long, long weeks the two vessels, the victor and the vanquished, lay in port, while the young hero captain, the lion of the day, lingered to know whether Coraline Malcolm was to live or die.

At last the surgeons told him there was hope, and across the seas he went on the Red Belt, with the Blue Belt, his retaken schooner, following astern.

And to his king he reported what he had done, and back to the shores of America he was sent to fill the place of Governor, left vacant by the death of Sir Henry Malcolm.

Arriving once more upon the scene of his famous exploit, he found that Lady Coraline had regained her health and was dwelling at the mansion where she had known so much of joy and sorrow in the past.

Need it be said that he urged her not to leave it, but to remain there as his wife, and that soon after she became the bride of Reginald Rossmore, who, knowing all the dark secret of the past, thought none the less of her because she had once been the bride of Black Beard, the Sea Vampire.

This much I feel my kind reader would have surmised, even had not the history of that early day in our country's struggles told him as much.

THE END.

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